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Foreword

In this Christmastide we are filled with joy and wonder beholding the great mystery of the holy incarnation. God's Son became a poor and humble human child for us men and our salvation. He took upon Himself our sin, our death, and our hell so that we could have his forgiveness, life, and heaven. As certainly as the Christ Child became incarnate that first Holy Night, so now he is present for us in the means of grace, the true gift of Christmas. The first article in this *Quarterly* considers that great mystery.

The second article is an essay entitled, *Sacramental Worship, Sacramental Preaching: Treasures of our Lutheran Church*, which was presented at the 1998 meeting of the Evangelical Lutheran Confessional Forum in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. The author is Professor Mark DeGarmeaux of Bethany Lutheran College. He points out that the incarnate Christ Child is present for us in the divine liturgy as the Word is proclaimed and the Sacraments are administered. Here first and foremost the Child feeds us with Himself and, secondarily, we serve Him with praise and thanksgiving.

What really is an adiaphoron and what is it not? This is the question of Professor Moldstad in his paper, *Contemporary Musings on the Import of FC Article X*. He states, "We must continue to press for things long labeled adiaphora truly to remain as matters open to Christian freedom, unless one can explicitly state that the confession of a doctrine from holy Scripture is on the line. Only in such a case could the intention of Article X in the *Formula* be invoked as a parallel."

The Rev. Timothy Erickson reminds us of the importance of the indigenous mission method in his essay entitled, *Indigenous Method as Mission Goal: Raising a Vivacious Daughter*. The Rev. Timothy Erickson is our senior missionary in Peru. In this essay he shows his deep love for Christian missions.

In this *Quarterly* there is a review of the book *Galatians*,

Ephesians, which is part of the People's Bible Series. The author of the book is Professor Armin J. Panning of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary. There is a review of the book *Pastoral Care Under the Cross: God in the Midst of Suffering* by Richard C. Eyer. In addition to this there is a review of the book *Sermon Studies On the Old Testament (ILCW Series A)*, John A. Braun, General Editor.

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The Friars' Christmas

by Gaylin R. Schmeling

Early in the 13th century there lived a friar in Italy who made two changes in the way his villagers observed Christmas — changes that so caught the imaginations of church leaders and the common people alike, that they spread throughout the world and are an important part of our celebration today.

The friar was Francis Assisi; the year 1223. For years he had longed to bring the Christmas story to the poor, hard-pressed people in a way that would help them understand the incarnation, the fact that the Almighty God was lying in the manger, that the creator of all took the form of the created and lay on hay and straw. He wanted the joy and love of Christmas to be as real to his people as the grim facts of everyday living. At the village church he set up a stable complete with farm animals and hay borrowed from a local farmer. Francis and the other church workers prepared to sing joyful praises to the Christ Child. At the appointed time villagers and country people gathered in wonder to see how the events unfolded that first Holy Night. They did not realize they were viewing the forerunner of all Christmas tableaux, pageants, and creches.

They did not know they were hearing and singing the first Christmas carols. Hymns had been sung prior to this time, but mainly by religious choirs. Francis now involved the people in the singing of the carols. The world welcomed Francis' warm, beautiful celebration of the Holy Season.

In the 16th century another friar, Martin Luther, adopted these customs with enthusiasm, incorporating singing and drama into the Christmas Eve worship he arranged with his wife for their six children and numerous relatives and friends who gathered in his home. Beside providing the world's first Christmas tree, he composed a number of songs for the occasion. One of his songs

found in modern hymnals is “FROM HEAVEN ABOVE TO EARTH I COME.” It was signed “LUTHER” with the notation written for his little son Hans. Luther described it as a children’s song concerning the child Jesus. It was used in creating the stable scene in the family gathering.

Luther had one of his children dress as an angel appearing in the midst of the assembled family. The angelic being sang the first seven stanzas of the hymn and the other children, dressed as Mary, Joseph, and shepherds, sang the remaining verses of the hymn. “FROM HEAVEN ABOVE” became so popular in Germany that in some towns it was sung from the church tower before dawn on Christmas Day.

All these rich traditions from the past, our Christmas creches, the children’s tableau, and the singing of carols are to point the faithful to the true legacy and gift of Christmas. Christmas is not to be a time of the year where we only overeat and get our spirit out of an alcohol bottle. It isn’t a time where we are merely concerned about how many presents we are going to get. If these things are our main concern, our Christmas will be sad indeed.

Rather, the Christmas legacy centers in the manger. The sweet little child so poor and helpless was the almighty God. The Lord of all lay on hay and straw, a great and mighty wonder. His person is indeed a great and mighty wonder, but the purpose of His coming is even more wonderful. Mankind was fast bound in the chain of sin and death. Our lot was a miserable existence here and horrors in the after life. But the Almighty became poor and lowly like us, lay in the manger and took our chains upon Himself, even the most terrible chain, the chain of death. This He endured for us and then broke us free by His glorious resurrection. He became poor and lowly as we are to raise us to His divine glory, eternal life in heaven. Now we don’t have to be afraid of living and we don’t have to be afraid of dying. He has already lived for us and knows how to help in every need. And He has prepared a place for us in heavenly mansions.

As certainly as the Christ Child became incarnate that first Holy Night, so He is present for us today in Holy Word and Blessed Sacrament and makes His dwelling in our heart as we sing in Luther's carol: ✓

AH, DEAREST JESUS, HOLY CHILD,
MAKE THEE A BED SOFT, UNDEFILED
WITHIN MY HEART, THAT IT MAY BE
A QUIET CHAMBER KEPT FOR THEE.

Sacramental Worship, Sacramental Preaching: Treasures of our Lutheran Church

by Mark DeGarmeaux

When we gather together to consider the Lord's work together and in our own fields of work, there are many questions we ask ourselves and each other about how things are going, about the status of our work, the church in the world, and how we can be faithful to the Lord's calling to preach the Gospel to all nations. It is easy for us to get caught up in numbers: budget, membership, attendance. Those numbers are important and do tell us, humanly speaking, something about what we are doing and how we are doing, though Jeremiah and Elijah are good reminders for us of how we should approach such reports. "*The Lord knows those who are His*" (2Ti 2:19). He calls on us to be faithful. We look at reports of the work in our synods with deep humility, true gratitude to the Lord, and with prayer that the Lord will bring salvation to lost souls through us, His earthen vessels, despite our failings, and only by the power of His holy Word and His Spirit, the Lord and Giver of life. Where we have been unfaithful or not done as we should and the Lord says: "You have been foolish," there we say: "Lord, have mercy." Where the Lord sees our meager efforts through the merits of Christ and says: "*Well done, good and faithful servant,*" then we say: "*We are unprofitable servants. We have done what was our duty to do*" (Luke 17:10), and we thank God for the undeserved blessings He has bestowed upon us. In our materialistic society, it is easy to turn our minds also to earthly things. In a day when "evangelical" is a term used more for law-preachers than gospel-preach-

ers, in a day when the beloved names Lutheran and even Christian seem so empty, it is easy to become discouraged, to be distracted from our real treasures, to wonder why our churches aren't like other churches. The Lord wants us to be faithful with what has been given to us. The Lord has given us forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation, purchased by the holy blood of His only-begotten Son, and distributed to us through His precious Word and Sacraments. In our Lutheran church we have so rich a treasure for which to thank the Lord. Not only do we have the rich doctrinal heritage of the gospel, restored by Luther and sustained by the Formulators and dogmaticians, but we also have the most beautiful tapestry of liturgy and hymns, so that the Lutheran church is called the singing church. Only in the Lutheran church do the Sacraments find the central place given to them by the Lord of grace. Only in the Lutheran church is the proper distinction between Law and Gospel regarded so highly that it is an inseparable part of our dogmatics, homiletics, catechetics, and (so importantly!) our pastoral care.

Sacramental Worship

When I am asked if the Lutheran church is high-church, I can't help but tend to answer in the positive. Though among us there are what some might call "high-churchmen" and "low-churchmen," I'm sure that all of our pastors want to do the works of God in a churchly and dignified manner. In the New Testament we are free from prescribed ceremonial rituals, yet the pattern of Old Testament and New Testament worship suggests solemnity and dignity, and directs order and decency.¹ The design of the structure and services of the Tabernacle and the Temple must strike us with awe by their beauty, glory, and refinement. An American protestant² preacher would not feel comfortable in the elaborate robes of the high priest, or even presenting incense or blood before the Lord. A Lutheran clergyman understands that

when he stands before the altar or in the pulpit, he is to be speaking the oracles of God, he is handling holy mysteries, he is dispensing forgiveness and eternal life. One modern “evangelistic” preacher might work his crowd to an emotional frenzy, calling them to repent and live right, giving their lives to the Lord.³ Another will pump up his followers to be successful and happy.⁴ What have we learned from them? Do we try to imitate them? It surely can be tempting. Have we studied them and analyzed what they are really saying? How does a Lutheran service differ? How does the task of the Lutheran preacher differ? Can “Evangelical” style (here referring to those groups who today call themselves “Evangelicals”) coexist with Lutheran substance, as the title of David Luecke’s book suggests? I would say: “No.” Harold Senkbeil gives the same response in his *Sanctification: Christ in Action*, published by Northwestern Publishing House.

A Lutheran service should be different and distinct. It will of necessity have elements in common with Roman Catholicism, Anglicanism, and Protestantism; but it will be distinct from all three as well. Our ELS fathers were concerned about this, and for that reason included Chapter 1 in our Synod’s By-Laws which states:

In order to preserve unity in liturgical forms and ceremonies, the Synod recommends to its congregations that they use the Order of Worship based on the Danish-Norwegian liturgy of 1685 and agenda of 1688, or the Common Order of Worship, as each congregation may decide.⁵

The Lutheran Divine Service will usually be the Mass, but not the Roman sacrifice of the mass. It will have hymns, but not hymns that are simply emotional filler⁶ or lofty language, rather hymns that are strong in musical and poetic quality and, above all, that glorify the Triune God and teach the faith, as the Augsburg Confession emphasizes:

Falsely are our churches accused of abolishing the Mass,

for the Mass is retained by us and celebrated with the highest reverence. All the usual ceremonies are also preserved, except that the parts sung in Latin are interspersed here and there with German hymns, which have been added to teach the people. For ceremonies are needed for this reason alone: that the unlearned be taught (AC 24).

A Lutheran service will not be without emotion, for the proclamation of the gospel inevitably draws an emotional response, but not a frenzied trance-like *ecstasis* (an ecstatic state; *literally, standing outside oneself*). A Lutheran service will be beautiful, because of the rich treasury of hymnody and liturgy that has been passed on to us: from Moses, David, Paul, Ambrose, Bernard of Clairvaux, Luther, Bugenhagen, Gerhardt, Kingo, and so many others.⁷

The “genius” of Lutheran worship is in understanding how God deals with us lost sinners: through the means of grace.⁸ In the Old Testament God put His name on the people through His covenant, through the services of the Tabernacle, through the Aaronic blessing: “*In every place where I record My name I will come to you, and I will bless you*” (Exo 20:24, Num 6:24-27). The Lord also promised to put His name in the Temple that Solomon would build, and at the Temple dedication the Lord said to Solomon: “*I have heard your prayer and your supplication that you have made before Me; I have sanctified this house which you have built to put My name there forever, and My eyes and My heart will be there perpetually*” (1Ki 9:3). Today God continues to put His name where we gather together around His Word and Sacraments, where He has promised to come to us. That is the emphasis of God’s Divine Service, not from man to God, but from God to man. It is a false view to say that the Divine Service (a better designation than “Worship Service”) is the “work *of* the people”, a mistranslation of liturgy (λειτουργία).⁹ Rather it is a “work *for* the people”, performed by God Himself through His chosen servant. Liturgy is not a work done by the people as a

service to God, as in the Protestant tradition, nor a work done by the priest on behalf of the people to God, as in the papist sacrifice of the mass. It is God's Service to us: *Gottesdienst, Gudstjeneste*.

In a similar way, our Lutheran Catechism lays this out so plainly that we should never waver from it.

Confession embraces two parts: the one is, that we confess our sins; the other, that we receive absolution, or forgiveness, from the confessor, as from God Himself, and in no wise doubt, but firmly believe, that our sins are thereby forgiven before God in heaven (*Small Catechism* V 16).

Here in the simplest terms is the distinction between sacramental and sacrificial parts of the Divine Service. Do our people know this distinction? Do we teach it to them? It is as essential as an understanding of the distinction between law and gospel. In fact, it is the same distinction. The sacrificial elements of the Service are our works, which are always of the law, though for Christians they are motivated by the gospel: in confession, hymns, and prayers. The sacramental elements of the Service are God's works, in other words, the gospel: in absolution, Scripture lessons, sermon, sacrament, and benediction. These elements must be foremost in the Divine Service. Even in a Service where the Sacrament is not celebrated, reference to it in the sermon will help to hold it central to the faith of the believer.

At the same time we must realize that these two elements, though distinct and separate, cannot always be easily or artificially "separated."¹⁰ As preachers, we must work diligently to present law and gospel, sacrifice and sacrament, in proper distinction. But in the hearts of the people this is the work of the One who searches the heart, truly to tear down and to build up at the proper time, the proper place, and the proper way. It must remain an unfathomable mystery that the cross is both stumbling block and salvation at the same time, as Paul makes so clear to the Corinthians: "*For the message of the cross is foolishness to*

those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God" (1Co 1:18). But God confounds the wise and makes use of us in our faltering simplicity.

There are probably two extremes in Lutheranism regarding the Divine Service, both of which are based on a false understanding of liturgics and our Lutheran heritage. There is the spirit that says one must follow only the words printed on page 15 or 41 (or whatever page begins the liturgy) and not waver a jot or tittle. In actuality there is no one who can do this, because no one follows the text and order exactly as printed, and even if he tried, rubrics at so many turns call for the use of one of several choices (even if it is the choice of speaking or chanting). Thus the liturgy becomes once again almost a Roman canon, ruled by jurists schooled in their own opinions. At the other end of the spectrum one might find those who wish to throw out the Lutheran liturgy altogether as being too archaic and not speaking to today's people. Such people would start with the premise and guiding principle that, since all this liturgical stuff is *adiaphora*,¹¹ therefore it is unimportant or not necessary to keep at all. Their services quickly become like those of the Protestants and Pentecostals: shapeless, anthropocentric and self-flattering for their authors. I suppose Luther might have made the same claim about liturgy being "unimportant" and might have discontinued the use of the Mass for his Renaissance Saxons. But he saw that the basic text of the Mass is timeless and Scriptural, and so his reforms were informed and conservative, excising only the canon because it was false. If we were to study the liturgy and hymns of our church, we too would discover their timelessness and Scriptural source and content, and we would not want to venture off into inflexibility or uninformed informality. Though liturgy and church ceremonies fall into the category of *adiaphora*, that does not mean they are unimportant or that one can and should throw them away whenever we feel like it. The traditional liturgy and ceremonies of the Lutheran church are Christocentric. Most attempts to devise "new" liturgies week after week have tremendous difficulty keeping that Christocentric

character. Hermann Sasse urges us to study and learn the liturgy.

Why do we not explain the liturgy to our congregations, especially to the youth? That naturally presumes that we know the teaching of our church regarding the divine service, that we ourselves study the old church orders with their liturgical treasures, that we understand the Lutheran way of combining loyalty to the old liturgical heritage with the great Gospel freedom of which Article 10 of the Formula of Concord speaks. We do not mean liturgical arbitrariness but authentic Gospel freedom. We have to face the fact that a heritage that has been lost over 250 years cannot be restored quickly. We must have several forms of the divine service, just as the Roman Church has and practices in the preservation of unfamiliar rites. We need small circles and congregations in which the old liturgical heritage is preserved along with confession—*confessio* always means confession of the faith, confession of sins, and praise of God all in one—as is done in such an exemplary way, a way that puts us all to shame, in the “Brethren” congregations of Braunschweig. Moreover, in the large congregations we need extensive instruction in the liturgy. We need preaching services and special services of Holy Communion. We particularly need the divine service in the sense of the Lutheran Mass with both preaching and the celebration of the Sacrament. The sermon will then need to be short, but above all it must be authentic proclamation of the Gospel. There can be no renewal of the Lord’s Supper without renewed preaching, preaching that is not just the pious talk of a man but disciplined exposition of Holy Scripture that strikes the heart. Such preaching grows out of serious study of Scripture, plumbing the depths of the divine Word. It should not be that the hearer of the text will always know exactly what is coming next because he has already heard it a hundred times.¹²

Part of knowing and learning the liturgy is knowing and learning new hymns or relearning “old” hymns. Even old hymns can be used in fresh ways. How many pastors spend as much

time picking hymns as they do preparing their sermon? No, that probably isn't the right way to put that. But consider that the congregation often spends more time singing hymns on a Sunday morning than listening to the sermon. We would never use the criterion "This is what they want to hear" when preparing a sermon; there's something Paul said about tickling itching ears (2Ti 4:3). And yet how often don't we hear that regarding choosing which hymns to sing in church: "Oh, but people like to sing that one!"¹³ What then becomes of our concern for the distinction between law and gospel, since often those hymns are devoid of such clear distinction or attain to teach neither? If we had only such generic hymns from which to choose, their use might be more easily tolerated, but with the vast wealth of Lutheran hymns and other good hymnody, how can we defend the too-frequent use of weak hymns? Not every hymn has to be *Salvation unto us is come*, but an old Lutheran hymnbook gives us pause to consider when it includes the phrase: "*For our children only the best is good enough.*"¹⁴ C. F. W. Walther, along with many other Lutheran fathers, has some strong words for us to consider about singing Methodist hymns in the Lutheran church (found in Appendix A). We would hope that our congregations are familiar with more than 50 to 100 hymns. The hymns they know and the hymns the pastor chooses should reflect our Lutheran heritage very strongly. The hymns of Luther and other Lutheran authors should be very familiar to Lutheran people, more familiar than hymns of Wesley and Watts. Of course, many hymns by Wesley and Watts are worthy to be sung in our churches, but not to the neglect of hymns by Luther, Decius, Spengler,¹⁵ Selnecker, Gerhardt, and Kingo. The old dictum *lex orandi lex credendi*¹⁶ (the law of praying is the law of believing) is two-pronged. It works both ways: we believe what we pray, and we pray what we believe. Our doctrine establishes our practice; it determines what things are appropriate or not in the services of the church. At the same time, what we do in the service is what people learn to love and to believe. "*We should teach our children to remain in the Lutheran*

Church instead of to sing themselves into some Reformed sect.”¹⁷

What we hold before the people of God on Sunday morning is eternally important. “Favorite” hymns and “praise music” will not do.¹⁸ What suffices for the people of God is the pure Gospel of forgiveness through the blood of Christ, delivered to them in the means of grace. In other words, the hymnody and preaching of the Lutheran church presents not a warm and fuzzy Jesus who is buddy and friend, but Jesus, the Son of God, who shed His blood on the cross and gives us in His Sacraments and Word the salvation He won on Golgotha once for all. In this way we come as prodigals back to the Father’s welcoming arms; and in the embrace of our heavenly Father we come to long for the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit that brings forth fruits of faith in our lives.

Sacramental Preaching

Perhaps in the area of homiletics is where the Lutheran church has been the strongest in its understanding of the sac-

ramental character of worship in the Holy Christian Church. The Reformation of the 16th century restored preaching to its rightful place of importance in the church. And the church today in all denominations has been affected positively by this restoration. The Roman Catholic council, Vatican II, is in some senses a 20th-century response to the Reformation, with many liturgical reforms including emphasis on better preaching. The early Lutheran reformers’ emphasis on preaching and teaching the Gospel had far-reaching effects throughout Europe and, today, through the world.

At the same time, the Lutheran church has an understanding of preaching that is distinct from other denominations as well. The Lutheran church recognizes the sermon as one of the sacramental parts of the Divine Service through which God offers and gives forgiveness of sins and strengthening of faith. It is not an

emotional tirade, a means to change society, nor a pronouncement of church law. We should not fall into the misuse of preaching that typifies the protestant “Evangelicals” who elevate preaching to the highest “sacrament” and yet so abuse and misuse law and gospel that their preaching does much harm to their hearers. Moving the pulpit to the center of the chancel does not reflect a Lutheran understanding of the gospel or the Divine Service, for it would give the impression that the sermon is the *most* important or the *only* important element of the Divine Service. Rather, the sermon finds its place alongside and in harmony with the Absolution, the Scripture lessons, and the Sacraments, as sacramental elements of the Service that deliver the blessings of the Gospel from God to His people. These elements fit together as means of grace. “*The sacrament is the verbum visibile (visible Word); the Word is the sacramentum audibile, the audible and heard sacrament.*”¹⁹ Neither should we fall into the denigration and neglect of preaching often encountered in the Roman and Eastern Orthodox churches where the sermon becomes a list of church laws or traditions and a reminder of the obligations of the faithful in the week to come. Thanks be to God that there are exceptions to this in those communions, and that fine Christian preaching of the gospel is found in their churches at times. But, in general, the distinction between Law and Gospel is not well known there.

Luther’s understanding of the distinction between Law and Gospel shines forth clearly in the preaching done in the Lutheran church. Of course, that statement is a bit idealistic because we all at times fall short in making this distinction, but we would hope that all Lutheran preachers strive to keep this distinction clear for themselves and for their hearers. The preaching in our Lutheran congregations should be neither the “*dreary preaching of the Puritans*”²⁰ nor the legalism or mysticism of the papists, which both so easily go along with a lack of understanding concerning Law and Gospel and the means of grace. Lutheran preaching will be evangelical in that the Gospel predominates, and it will be sacramental because that Gospel emphasis proclaims “*the wonder-*

ful works of God” (Act 2:11), “*that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation. Therefore we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ’s behalf, be reconciled to God*” (2Co 5:19-20). Consider also the Augsburg Confession’s statement regarding preaching:

Article V

The Office of the Ministry

That we may obtain this faith, the office of teaching the Gospel and administering the sacraments was instituted. For through the Word and sacraments, as through instruments, the Holy Spirit is given, who works faith where and when it pleases God in those who hear the Gospel. That is, God, not because of our own merits, but for Christ’s sake, justifies those who believe that they are received into favor for Christ’s sake.

We condemn the Anabaptists and others who think that the Holy Spirit comes without the external Word but through their own preparations and works.

At Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary one of the textbooks used for homiletics is Walther’s *The Proper Distinction between Law and Gospel*. And I hope it always will be. I know that this distinction is also stressed at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary. Pastors of both our synods are concerned, and should be concerned, that the Law and Gospel are properly preached among us. We must always be alert to this essential of Lutheran preaching and not think that as Lutheran preachers we automatically do it. It is the most natural way of our sinful flesh to confuse these two teachings. Falling into moralizing or into preaching the theology of glory or success is too easy and too dangerous for us to take our work for granted.

Just to take one example, it is easy, when preaching, to give a false description of a Christian. Walther warns against this in Thesis XVII: “*God’s Word is not rightly divided when be-*

lievers are pictured in a way that does not fit all believers at all times with regard both to strength of faith and to the feelings and the fruitfulness connected with it."²¹ And he gives the following as part of his explanation:

Sometimes Christians are described as being perfectly happy all the time, while non-Christians are pictured as being most unhappy. I have often noticed this in your sermons, but neither of these descriptions is true. Many thousands of Christians are filled with fear and inner turmoil and feel acutely unhappy, while many non-Christians appear to have no worries at all.

You may treat topics like "The Blessedness of a Christian," but remember well: *This blessedness does not consist in having nothing but happy emotions.* Even in the midst of bitter feelings he can trust God to accept him and take him to heaven when he dies, and that is blessedness indeed.²²

The simple change from "Christians aren't afraid of death" to "Christians do not have to fear death" or even "Christians, don't be afraid of death, because Christ has conquered it for us" makes all the difference in the world.

A correct understanding of preaching in liturgical churches is that it is not primarily to be done for evangelism, for most of the hearers are Christians already, nor is it primarily to be a lecture in Christian theology, but it is to fit within a grand continuum of godly devotion of God's faithful people. It is to be a part of the liturgy and proclaim the Gospel as clearly as does the *Gloria in excelsis* or the *Te Deum laudamus*. There is no finer preaching of the Gospel and the saving work of the Holy Trinity than in these two canticles of the Church.

Glory be to God on high, and on earth peace, good will

toward men.

We praise You, we bless You, we worship You.
We glorify You; we give thanks to You for Your great
glory.

O Lord God, heavenly King, God the Father Almighty.

O Lord the only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ, O Lord
God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father,

You take away the sin of the world, have mercy upon
us;

You take away the sin of the world, receive our
prayer.

You are seated at the right hand of God the Father,
have mercy upon us.

For You only are holy, You only are the Lord,

You only O Christ, with the Holy Spirit, are most high
in the glory of God the Father.

Who can improve on that wondrous hymn begun by the angels at Christ's birth? It is a marvelous confession of the nature and work of the Triune God. Though we use the *Gloria* as a sacrificial part of the Service, its message and character is sacramental, what God has done and still does for us. And if we and our people truly learn and understand the *Te Deum*, which Luther lists among the Creeds of the Church, then we have a proper understanding of Law and Gospel.

When You took upon Yourself to deliver man,
You humbled Yourself to be born of a virgin.

When You had overcome the sharpness of
death,

You opened the kingdom of heaven
to all believers.

You sit at the right hand of God in the glory of
the Father.

We believe that You will come to be
our Judge.

We therefore pray You, help Your servants
whom You have redeemed with Your precious
blood,
make them to be numbered with Your saints in
glory everlasting.

This text clearly describes the Person and work of Christ our Savior, and the promise of everlasting life to all believers. Our preaching can draw from these wonderful familiar texts of the Church and strike a familiar and resonant chord in the hearer, and make both our sermons and the liturgy more understandable and accessible and joined together as a unit. It will both teach and reinforce the work of God as Maker, Redeemer, and Comforter.

The usual task of the Christian preacher in the Divine Service is not to proclaim the gospel for the first time, but to proclaim the gospel to people who are already Christians, who are at the same time saints and sinners. There are many opportunities for preachers and laity to introduce the gospel to others, but the Divine Service is not the usual place for this. Erik Routley, an English Congregational preacher known for his work in Christian hymnology, puts it this way:

[The] main task of the preacher ... is 'preaching to the converted.' He hopes to arouse in each hearer some form of 'YES!'²³ which is personal to that hearer. He is not presenting the gospel for the first time when he is preaching within the liturgy. He is reminding people of it. He is nourishing in them a hunger which constantly comes week by week. It is not that they have fallen badly short of Christian standards during the week, but rather that they are engaged in a process of gradual growth, which is nourished by the periodic proclamation of the Gospel. This kind of preaching can be done only in the House of Faith; it must presuppose a certain deposit both of faith and of knowledge in the hearer. For this reason it can be presented quite briefly. A sermon as part of the liturgy should not run the length of the main address in an evangelistic crusade, and indeed the American custom of holding campus services which, slotted as they are into a busy academic timetable, provide for addresses of from four to seven minutes, can be an admirable example of the value of brief liturgical addresses — besides being a most salutary discipline upon preachers who normally claim the right to be more expansive.²⁴

As Lutherans we would state even more strongly that preaching is not only reminding people of the Gospel, but proclaiming it to them again from God Himself. It is a sacramental, effectual work of God. A few years ago, Prof. George Kraus related similar thoughts at the annual Reformation Lectures at Bethany. Not in his written text, but in the discussion he made this statement, which I must paraphrase: «*Grandma Schmidt* [and for us Norwegians he added, *or Grandma Anderson*] *doesn't come to church to learn the Gospel or because she doesn't know the gospel. She comes to church because she loves the Gospel and because she loves to hear it.*» And if we preachers don't preach it to her, we have failed.

As the Divine Service is a wonderfully-arranged presentation of Holy Scripture, also the sermon should breathe Scriptural language and allusion in all its parts. As part of the Divine Service the sermon will also fit itself into the order of service by referring to parts of the service appropriate to the text and theme of the day. Consider the following description of Anglican Evensong and whether it is an apt description of the Divine Service as celebrated among us.

Evensong in Coventry Cathedral is a very tiny fragment of something else: it is a fragment of the worship which is offered to God by Christian people, every hour of the twenty-four, in every part of the world. When you come to Evensong here, it is as if you were dropping in on a conversation already in progress — a conversation between God and men which began long before you were born, and will go on long after you are dead. So do not be surprised, or disturbed, if there are some things in the conversation which you do not at once understand.

Evensong is drawn almost entirely from the Bible. Its primary purpose is to proclaim the wonderful works of God in history and in the life and death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Its secondary purpose is to evoke from the worshiper a response of praise, prayer and obedience.²⁵

The Lutheran Divine Service, like Evensong, is drawn almost entirely from the Bible, and so should the sermon be. One of the geniuses of traditional worship in the Christian Church is the balance of repetition and variety, of comfortable familiarity and ever-new understanding and appreciation of the Gospel. Here is where I will make my pitch for the use of the historic one-year lectionary.²⁶ Any lectionary has its good and bad points. The historic lectionary is no exception. Let me mention just a few of the benefits. The people hear the same lessons every year so that they become part of their life and their Christian devotion. They almost become part of the liturgy, in that the very wording is so familiar that we can almost recite sections word-for-word. Another benefit, which is too often overlooked or diminished, is that we have centuries of sermons to study on these lessons, not only from earlier Christianity, but even within Lutheranism. Who can find a better teacher of Law-Gospel sacramental preaching than Luther or Chemnitz or Bugenhagen or Gerhard or Laache or Walther or Koren? The pastors of the Ft. Wayne conference of the Missouri Synod 125 years ago felt that Chemnitz' *Harmony of the Gospels* was so valuable for homiletics that they translated sections of it and arranged it according to the Sunday Gospel lessons and published it in seven volumes.²⁷ Dr. Fürbringer of Concordia Seminary (St. Louis) also put together a wonderful book of homiletical helps on the Gospel lessons. They were invaluable tools in my first years of ministry. Unfortunately they are both still to be found only in German and/or Latin, but it would be a laudable service to the Church if we would dedicate ourselves to bringing them into English for our pastors and seminary students today. Koren's sermons and Laache's *Book of Family Prayer* also provide healthy direction for Lutheran preachers.

Another benefit of the traditional lectionary is that it provides for proclaiming the whole counsel of God and avoiding the pastor's pet topics. Very rarely have I preached on free texts. Very rarely have I had to preach on free texts. Even when asked

to preach for special occasions or under special circumstances, the Church Year has provided an astounding source of material appropriate to the occasion.²⁸ Remember that Walther said our preaching should *fit all believers at all times*.²⁹

Sacramental preaching also emphasizes the Means of Grace. Lutheran sermons will have frequent reference to our state as baptized Christians, who constantly receive the Lord's absolution, and who are regularly³⁰ refreshed with the Heavenly Feast of Christ's Holy Table. We will preach about prayer (Rogate, Easter 6) and about good works in their proper understanding (Trinity 25), as well as evangelism and mission work (Epiphany season), Christian education (Epiphany 1), and many other topics. The Church Year itself provides ample opportunity and direction for this. But the sermon will always direct God's people to the source of their comfort and strength for this life and the life to come: the Gospel in Word and Sacraments. Truly sacramental preaching declares the wonderful works of God, creates in us clean hearts, and prepares for Christian life on earth and eternal glory in heaven. Walther states this also in Thesis IX:

God's Word is not rightly divided when sinners, struck and terrified by the Law, instead of being directed to Word and sacrament, are instructed to strive for the state of grace through prayer and struggles, that is, to keep on praying and wrestling until they feel that God has pardoned them.³¹

Here is where the Lutheran church shines so brilliantly in holding out to lost sinners the almighty and saving works of God. Whereas the Reformed churches turn the sacraments into works of man (such as "believer's baptism") and the Roman Church rests the power of the sacraments in the power of the priest endowed at ordination through his "indelible character" and in their mere performance (*ex opere operato*), the Lutheran Church relies on the words of our Lord:

“Make disciples of all nations, by baptizing them... and teaching them”³²; “He saved us by the washing of regeneration³³”; “This is My body... My blood... shed for many for the remission of sins³⁴”; “So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; it shall not return to Me void, but it shall accomplish what I please, and it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it.”³⁵

Preaching that directs people to God’s promises delivered to us in the Word and Sacraments is proper Christian preaching and “*strengthens the weak hands, and makes firm the feeble knees.*”³⁶ It directs the bruised reed and smoldering wick to the only One who can restore it and fan it back into a glowing flame.³⁷

Our preaching should also be in accord with the one Holy Christian Church. The Reformation of the 16th century has had an enormous impact on the preaching done in the church since that time, but we make a grave error if we think that there was no true preaching before 1517 or before 1850 or 1971. The early church had remarkable preachers as well, whose works and reputation are still preserved and honored: Chrysostom, Ambrose, Augustine, Cyril of Jerusalem, and John of Damascus. There were also Bernard of Clairvaux, Savonarola, Wycliffe, and Hus. We do well to study their works and learn from their words and their style. This does not mean that our preaching should be exactly like theirs, but we can learn from their work how to understand the doctrines of Scripture and how to draw on the whole of Scripture to proclaim the whole counsel of God. In the Middle Ages there were preaching monks who went around proclaiming and teaching the Word of God, especially as summarized in early Catechisms. Besides the monastic office services, like Matins and Vespers, there was also a preaching office called Prone.³⁸ If the hymns *Jesus, The Very Thought of Thee* and *Jesus, Thou Joy of Loving Hearts*,³⁹ ascribed to Bernard of Clairvaux, is an indication of his preaching, then the Gospel was proclaimed clearly by some even in the Middle Ages. Concerning Bernard of Clairvaux, Luther says: “*If there ever has lived a truly God-*

fearing and pious monk, then St. Bernard was such a one, whom I rank higher than all monks and popes in all the world, and I have never heard or read of anyone that can be compared with him.”⁴⁰

Besides learning from the early church fathers and the preachers and hymn-writers of the Middle Ages, certainly every Lutheran preacher should frequently and regularly read sermons by sound Lutheran teachers: Luther, Gerhard, Laache, Walther, Koren, etc. And especially a regular reading of Walther’s *The Proper Distinction Between Law and Gospel* will keep our preaching focused on Law and Gospel, and keep it sacramental in nature, not legalistic, but truly evangelical, genuine preaching of the Gospel as Christ has sent us to do.

We must avoid all mingling of Law and Gospel. We cannot delude ourselves into thinking that we are preaching the Gospel if we simply use the word “Gospel” or “Savior” in our sermon. If we preach only about how we have the Gospel and are to share it with others, but do not clearly expound what the Gospel is and apply its sweet medicine to our hearers, then we have preached **about** the Gospel, but we have not preached the Gospel. The Gospel points the believer to Christ as Savior who takes away all our sins. Preachers of the Gospel direct people to the means of grace to receive the blessings of the Gospel: forgiveness, spiritual strength, and eternal life. The Gospel is all promise, all blessing, all giving from God—offering and delivering life and salvation—making no demands at all. Walther’s Thesis V states:

The first and most glaring way of mingling Law and Gospel is the teaching of the papists, Socinians, and rationalists that makes of Christ a new Moses or Law-giver and turns the Gospel into a doctrine of works and, conversely, like the papists, condemns and anathematizes those who teach the Gospel as a message of God’s free grace in Christ.⁴¹

Yes, we should teach good morals. Yes, we should encourage

people in sharing the Gospel. But that is not preaching the Gospel. The Explanation of the Catechism gives us the most basic distinction: "*The Law teaches us what we are to do and not to do; the Gospel teaches us what God has done, and still does, for our salvation.*"⁴² When Christians are urged to do good works, the motivation comes from the Gospel, but the works are still according to the Law, "*what we are to do and not to do.*" It is the same distinction between sacrificial and sacramental acts, our works and God's works. Along with Thesis V, Walther then gives an example of preaching the Gospel:

Jeremiah 31:31-34 tells us that God will make a *new* covenant, not a Law covenant like the one at Sinai. On the contrary, "I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more." That is the sum and substance of Christ's Gospel, forgiveness of sins by free grace for Christ's sake. Anyone who thinks Christ is a new Law-giver, bringing us new laws, crosses out the whole Christian religion. For that is what distinguishes Christianity from all other religions of the world. They all say, "This is how you must be and what you must do to get to heaven." But the Christian religion says, "You are indeed a lost and condemned sinner who cannot save himself. But do not despair. Someone has obtained salvation for you. Christ has opened the gates of heaven, and He invites you: 'Come, everything is ready. Come to the marriage feast!'"⁴³ ...

Examine the whole life of Jesus, and you will discover that He does not go around like a proud philosopher, a moralist surrounded by so-called "decent" people whom he teaches how to attain to the highest degree of philosophical perfection. On the contrary, He goes after the lost sinners and even says that harlots and tax collectors will get into the kingdom of heaven before the proud Pharisees. Here He shows clearly what His Gospel is, and all apostles say the same thing. (See John 1:17; John 3:17; Romans 1:16-17; 1 Timothy 1:15.)⁴⁴

Our people through our preaching should know themselves to be sinners who deserve nothing from God, but they should also see God's grace in Christ and know that He has forgiven all their sins and opened the gates of heaven to them. That is His pure Word and promise. That is His Gospel, His good news, that Grandma Schmidt and Grandma Anderson love to hear and need to hear every Sunday.

Above all, Walther's final thesis (XXV) must be kept in mind when writing every single sermon: "*God's Word is not rightly divided when the preacher does not let the Gospel predominate.*"⁴⁵ Here Walther draws from sermons in Scripture itself:

The first preacher of Christ after His birth was the angel who told the terrified shepherds: "Be not afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of a great joy which will come to all the people" (Luke 2:10). Not a syllable of Law, not a trace of prescriptions and God's demands upon man, but the very opposite, God's grace toward all people. The heavenly hosts sing joyfully: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men" [v. 14 KJV]. ... God asks nothing but that people will accept His gift with joy and be comforted by this Child. There a heavenly preacher gave us an example of how we should preach. We must let the gospel predominate. We must indeed preach the Law, but only as preparation for the gospel. Else we are not true servants of the Gospel.⁴⁶ ...

1 Corinthians 2:2: The sole topic of his preaching, said Paul, was "Jesus Christ and Him crucified." Day and night he thought about how he could bring Christ to the people and lead them to faith in Him. Jesus Christ was the Core and Center of all his message. This was written also for our sake. ...

It is not enough for you to feel that you are orthodox and able to present the pure teaching. It will be of no help if you mingle Law and Gospel. And the most subtle form of such mingling is when we *also* preach the Gos-

pel but do not let it predominate. As soon as you fail to do so, your hearers will go hungry and many will starve to death spiritually. You give them too little to eat, for the true bread of life is not the Law but the Gospel.⁴⁷ ...

If you richly preach the Gospel, you need not worry that the people will forsake your church if some charlatan should come and put on a boisterous performance in the pulpit. The people will say: "Our pastor has brought us what we do not find elsewhere. He is a true Lutheran preacher, who showers great treasures upon us every Sunday."⁴⁸

God grant that one day people will say of you: "He preaches well, but his message is too sweet." Just don't spend too much time on the Law. Come quickly with the Gospel. When the Law has made the iron red-hot, then come quickly with the gospel to forge it while it is hot. Once it has cooled off, it is too late.⁴⁹

"Sacramental" Praying

Here I must proceed with the greatest caution, for, as we all know, prayer is not "sacramental" and must not be confused with, or considered, a "means of grace." And yet, our Lutheran theology and approach to worship will also direct our use of prayer in the Divine Service. Prayer is an important aspect of worship in the Christian Church, as we learn from 1 Timothy 2:1-2: "*Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men, for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence.*" It is even more striking when we remember that Paul's encouragement here, and also Peter's in his epistles, were made under Roman emperors who were already beginning to persecute Christians.

Prayer is a sacrificial part of the service, but properly-worded prayers also reflect the sacramental emphasis of the Lutheran theology of worship. The perfect prayer, of course, is

the one taught by our Lord. The Lord's Prayer has been called the greatest martyr because it is often said so routinely and without thought. Perhaps we might consider the second-greatest martyr, then, to be the General Prayer. The larger problem here is not that it is said without thought, but that it is not said at all. Too often it is omitted for the sake of time⁵⁰ or for various other reasons. The General Prayer is, or is based on, the Litany. This is surely a time in the church and in the world when prayer is very much needed.

By skipping the General Prayer, we may also be giving the impression that prayer really isn't all that important. The old Church Orders and Church Ritual used prayers frequently in the Divine Service, even using the Lord's Prayer repeated at several places in the same service: with the opening prayer, before the sermon text, after the General Prayer, during the Communion liturgy, and with the closing prayer. Now it is considered best not to pray the Lord's Prayer more than once in a service. It is not vain repetition; it is not done "*thinking that they are heard for their many words*,"⁵¹ but it is invoking God's blessings on all parts of our worship. It is ritual properly used, but not ritualistic.

Some have tried to devise a series of General Prayers for the Church Year. This can be done as long as they contain the same thoughts and thrust of the General Prayer. If they become another collect or Prayer of the Day, then they defeat the purpose of the General Prayer, which is to pray for our congregation, the whole Church, and all people. In this prayer we "*pray for the Church and for all people according to their needs*."⁵² One pastor comments:

Week after week, I am amazed at how some aspect of the theme of the day is found within the General Prayer. Not only that, but the General Prayer also serves as a "prayer primer" for the congregation; from it, as from the Lord's Prayer, they learn *how* to pray. But this only happens when they hear it week after week.⁵³

There are some congregations and pastors who have continued or reinstated the regular use of the General Prayer, for which we can be most thankful. In a day when we hear so much concern about the state of the church, our society, and our government and rulers, about other religions gaining so much ground in America, we do well to pray for the church, our government and even for those in other religions:

Look in mercy upon Your Church. Protect it and sanctify it by Your truth. May Your Word be taught in its purity and Your Sacraments be rightly administered. ... In mercy remember the enemies of Your Church and grant to them repentance unto life. ...

Protect and bless Your servants, the President of the United States, the Governor of this state, our judges and magistrates and all in authority. Fit them for their high calling by the gift of Your Spirit of wisdom and fear, so that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence.⁵⁴

Professor Bruce Backer also makes a good point regarding the General Prayer:

Saint Paul urges his Christians to pray for civic righteousness. Certainly it does not justify. Yet it offers believers a reasonably calm environment so that they can live their lives in peace and worship according to God's word. Therefore the General Prayer should be maintained. If people consider it too long, they should employ the responsive prayers that are available now. Likewise, since the days are very evil, the congregation should by all means pray for individual members of the congregations who seek its help. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective (James 5:16). Think of what the entire community of believers can do.⁵⁵

Using the General Prayer regularly and properly also emphasizes the means of grace in the ears of the hearers. We pray

for the Word to be taught in its purity, the Sacraments rightly to be administered, and for a proper reception of the Lord's Supper by the communicants. We pray not only for our own congregation or our own synod, but for the whole Christian Church: "*Grant unto Your Church faithful pastors who shall declare Your truth with power and shall live according to Your will.*"

The Lutheran church has been truly blessed by God with a rich treasury of liturgy, hymnody, preaching, and praying. We are not a sect, but we understand and recognize ourselves as part of the Church catholic, the one Holy Christian and Apostolic Church. At the same time we realize that there is a difference between our theology and that of other denominations in many ways. Our treasures are in the understanding of sacramental and sacrificial elements in the Divine Service, in understanding the Word and Sacraments as powerful and efficacious means of grace, and in the proper distinction between Law and Gospel. And we look forward to the marriage feast of heaven when the Bride will be joined to Christ Himself and will enjoy the great *sacramentum* of the marriage feast of the Lamb.

Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be with them and be their God" (Rev 21:2-3).

1. How lovely shines the Morning Star!
The nations see and hail afar
The light in Judah shining.
Thou David's Son of Jacob's race,
My Bridegroom and my King of Grace,
For Thee my heart is pining.

Lowly,
Holy,
Great and glorious,
Thou victorious
Prince of graces,
Filling all the heavenly places.

2. O highest joy by mortals won,
True Son of God and Mary's Son,
Thou high-born King of ages!
Thou art my heart's most beauteous Flower,
And Thy blest Gospel's saving power
My raptured soul engages.

Thou mine,
I Thine;
Sing hosanna!
Heavenly manna
Tasting, eating,
Whilst Thy love in songs repeating.

3. Now richly to my waiting heart,
O Thou, my God, deign to impart
The grace of love undying.
In Thy blest body let me be,
E'en as the branch is in the tree,
Thy life my life supplying.

Sighing,
Crying.
For the savor
Of Thy favor;
Resting never,
Till I rest in Thee forever.

4. A pledge of peace from God I see
 When Thy pure eyes are turned to me
 To show me Thy good pleasure.
 Jesus, Thy Spirit and Thy Word,
 Thy body and Thy blood, afford
 My soul its dearest treasure.
 Keep me
 Kindly
 In Thy favor,
 O my Savior!
 Thou wilt cheer me;
 Thy Word calls me to draw near Thee.

5. Thou, mighty Father, in Thy Son
 Didst love me ere Thou hadst begun
 This ancient world's foundation.
 Thy Son hath made a friend of me,
 And when in spirit Him I see,
 I joy in tribulation.
 What bliss
 Is this!
 He that liveth
 To me giveth
 Life forever;
 Nothing me from Him can sever.

6. Lift up the voice and strike the string.
 Let all glad sounds of music ring
 In God's high praises blended.
 Christ will be with me all the way,
 Today, tomorrow, every day,
 Till traveling days be ended.
 Sing out,
 Ring out
 Triumph glorious,
 O victorious,
 Chosen nation;
 Praise the God of your salvation.

7. Oh, joy to know that Thou, my Friend,
Art Lord, Beginning without end,
The First and Last, Eternal!
And Thou at length—O glorious grace!—
Wilt take me to that holy place,
The home of joys supernal.
Amen,
Amen!
Come and meet me!
Quickly greet me!
With deep yearning,
Lord, I look for Thy returning.⁵⁶

Appendix A:

Letter from C.F.W. Walther

Honored Sir,

This morning I received your worthy letter, written on the 19th of the month. In your letter you ask for my opinion on whether it is advisable to introduce the singing of Methodist songs in a Lutheran Sunday School. May what follows serve as a helpful reply to your questions:

No, this is not advisable, rather very incorrect and pernicious.

1. Our church is so rich in hymns that you could justifiably state that if one were to introduce Methodist hymns in a Lutheran school this would be like carrying coals to Newcastle. The singing of such hymns would make the rich Lutheran Church into a beggar which is forced to beg from a miserable sect. Thirty or forty years ago a Lutheran preacher might well have been forgiven this. For at that time the Lutheran Church in our country was as poor as a beggar when it comes to song books for Lutheran children. A preacher scarcely knew where he might obtain such little hymn books. Now, however, since our church itself has everything it needs, it is unpardonable when a preacher of our church causes little ones to suffer the shame of eating a foreign bread.

2. A preacher of our church also has the holy duty to give souls entrusted to his care pure spiritual food, indeed, the very best which he can possibly obtain. In Methodist songs there is much which is false, and which contains spiritual poison for the soul. Therefore, it is soul-murder to set before children such poisonous food. If the preacher claims, that he allows only "correct" hymns to be sung, this does not excuse him. For, first of all, the true Lutheran spirit is found in none of them; second, our hymns are more powerful, more substantive, and more prosaic; third, those hymns which deal with the Holy Sacraments are completely in error; fourth, when these little sectarian hymnbooks come into the hands of our children, they openly read and sing false hymns.

3. A preacher who introduces Methodist hymns, let alone Methodist hymnals, raises the suspicion that he is no true Lutheran at heart, and that he believes one religion is as good as the other, and that he is thus a unionistic-man, a mingler of religion and churches.

4. Through the introduction of Methodist hymn singing he also makes those children entrusted to his care of unionistic sentiment, and he himself leads them to leave the Lutheran Church and join the Methodists.

5. By the purchase of Methodist hymn books he subsidizes the

false church and strengthens the Methodist fanatics in their horrible errors. For the Methodists will think, and quite correctly so, that if the Lutheran preachers did not regard our religion as good as, or indeed, even better than their own, they would not introduce Methodist hymn books in their Sunday schools, but rather would use Lutheran hymn books.

6. By introducing Methodist hymn books, the entire Lutheran congregation is given great offense, and the members of the same are led to think that Methodists, the Albright people, and all such people have a better faith than we do.

This may be a sufficient answer regarding this dismal matter. May God keep you in the true and genuine Lutheran faith, and help you not to be misled from the same, either to the right or to the left.

Your unfamiliar, yet known friend, in the Lord Jesus Christ,

C. F. W. Walther
St. Louis, Missouri

January 23, 1883

*Translated by M. Harrison
Fort Wayne, Indiana
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Appendix B

Preaching Services in the Medieval Church

From *A Handbook of Church Music*, p. 38-39.

While it is true that preaching was not often part of the medieval mass, it is not true that there was little preaching in the medieval Church. But the preaching was seldom done by the parochial clergy, many of whom were trained only to say mass. It was done by monks, some of whom gained sizable reputations as itinerant preachers; an obvious example is St. Bernard of Clairvaux. These men would deliver series of sermons in a local church much in the style of a present-day preaching mission.

Preaching services were part of the Gallican tradition from the sixth century; their roots are uncertain. They were from the pulpit, which in pre-Reformation churches was in the nave, where people could gather around. Their form was freer than the eucharistic liturgy, and usually they were vernacular services. Latin sermons were preached, of course, where schools or universities offered a learned congregation.

Part of the liturgical reform under Charlemagne was an emphasis on preaching. He ordered sermons to be preached within the eucharistic liturgy, where they were to exert a strong educational influence. For pedagogical reasons the sermon was followed by the Creed, the Our Father, and the Decalog.

Out of these elements a paraliturgy called the Prone (*Pronaus*) developed within the mass itself. Into its orbit came also the public confession (as preparation for Communion), the Ave Maria, and hymns that were at first Leisen attached to the Kyries of the Intercessions. A highly evolved form of the Prone is reflected in this outline from Basel: (1) Latin "In nomine...", (2) Sermon text in Latin, (3) German Votum with congregational "Amen," (4) Text in German, (5) Invocation of the Holy Spirit, (6) Sermon, (7) Parish notices, (8) Prayer of the Church, (9) Our Father and Ave Maria, (10) Apostles' Creed, (11) Decalog, (12) Public Confession, (13) Closing Votum. A simpler structure is this form from Biberach: (1) Bells rung, (2) Ave Maria, (3) Reading of the Holy Gospel, (4) Sermon on the Gospel, (5) Parish notices, (6) Public Confession, (7) Giving Holy Water, (8) Hymn, if feast day. [This part is quoted from *Leiturgia*, III, pp. 23-24: Eberhard Weismann, "Der Predigtgottesdienst und die verwandten Formen."]

It is not surprising that such a developed service separated itself

from the mass. The Prone was often done before the mass; sometimes it was altogether independent. By the 15th century the importance of the preaching service is reflected in the establishment in large churches and foundations of the office of preacher (*Praedikaturen*). Preachers had only minor liturgical responsibilities and were comparatively well trained theologically. In the 16th century, it was through these preachers that the Reformation often made its first appearance.

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Endnotes

¹ 1 Corinthians 14:36.

² The definition of protestant used in this paper is non-Roman Catholic, non-Lutheran, western Christian. The term Reformed is often used, but is not complete or accurate. This is an attempt also to show the distinctiveness of Lutheranism within Christianity.

³ This seems to be the tone of Jimmy Swaggart and Kenneth Copeland.

⁴ Just the names of some of the "ministries" of such preachers show us their goal: Robert Schuller's "Hour of Power"; Kenneth Copeland's "Believer's Voice of Victory;," Mac Hammond's "The Winner's Way."

⁵ *Evangelical Lutheran Synod Constitution and By-Laws* (Revised 1986).

⁶ Gordon Lathrop in *Twenty Centuries of Christian Worship*, p. 288: "Hymns are not just a nice thing to do before one gets on to the sermon. They belong to the core of any Lutheran liturgy."

⁷ See the Appendix for a letter from C. F. W. Walther regarding singing Methodist hymns in the Lutheran church.

⁸ Gordon Lathrop in *Twenty Centuries of Christian Worship*, p. 287: "We cannot live, we certainly cannot be Christians, without them [the means of grace]. So there is no 'Lutheran worship' in which these 'means of grace' are not central."

⁹ "This word does not properly signify a sacrifice, but rather the public ministry, and agrees aptly with our belief, namely, that one minister who consecrates tenders the body and blood of the Lord to the rest of the people, just as one minister who preaches tenders the Gospel to the people, as Paul says, 1 Cor. 4, 1: Let a man so account of us as of the ministers of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God, i.e., of the Gospel and the Sacraments. And 2 Cor. 5, 20: We are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us; we pray you in Christ's stead, Be ye

reconciled to God. Thus the term λειτουργία agrees aptly with the ministry. For it is an old word, ordinarily employed in public civil administrations, and signified to the Greeks public burdens, as tribute, the expense of equipping a fleet, or similar things" (Ap 24:80-81, *Triglotta*).

¹⁰ "The Cross of Christ can, in the wrong hands, become an object of sentimental, irrational, uncommunicative adoration; it can be used to induce in believers sentimental despair and elaborate, sterile quietism." *The Divine Formula*, Erik Routley, page 47 ¶ 101.

¹¹ "Nor is it necessary that human traditions, rites, or ceremonies, instituted by men, should be the same everywhere." Augsburg Confession, VII.

¹² Sasse, p. 34. On page 110 he also says: "Our people should know the meaning of the Gloria, the Preface, the Sanctus, the Benedictus and Hosanna, the Consecration as it is expounded in the Formula of Concord, the Agnus Dei, and the Communion. We can explain it to them in special lectures, but we can also do it in sermon and Bible class."

¹³ *Lutheran Hymnary, Junior*, p. xii-xiii. "The songs of Lutheran children and youth should be essentially from Lutheran sources. The Lutheran Church is especially rich in songs and hymns of sound doctrine, high poetical value and fitting musical setting. They express the teachings and spirit of the Lutheran Church and help one to feel at home in this Church. Of course, there are songs of high merit and sound Biblical doctrine written by Christians in other denominations also, and some of these could and should find a place in a Lutheran song treasury. But the bulk of the songs in a Lutheran song book should be drawn from Lutheran sources. We should teach our children to remain in the Lutheran Church instead of to sing themselves into some Reformed sect." See also Lundquist, p. 65: "Many American Lutheran churches do not sing Lutheran church hymns at all. How deplorable! We often attend Lutheran church services where not a single Lutheran church hymn or Lutheran chorale is sung. Here is a serious flaw in American

Lutheran education and leadership. How about the hymn singing in our American Lutheran Sunday schools? Would it not be well to sing at least one Lutheran church hymn each Sunday? Or shall we permit Lutheran hymnody to die? Is great Lutheran hymnody a thing of the past?"

¹⁴ Quoted in the Preface to the *Lutheran Hymnary, Junior*, p. xvi, ascribed to a German Lutheran Sunday School Hymnal.

¹⁵ Especially since Spengler's hymn "By Adam's Fall" (ELH 430) is quoted in our Confessions (Formula of Concord I 8).

¹⁶ Also stated "ut legem credendi lex statuat supplicandi" ["that the law of praying establishes the law of believing"] by Celestine I, quoted in Sasse, p. 117.

¹⁷ *Lutheran Hymnary, Junior*, p. xiii.

¹⁸ Prof. James Tiefel gives this insight also: "A few churches here and there are using praise choruses and Christian contemporary music, mostly in youth-oriented alternative services and Sunday evening services, although sometimes also in Sunday morning services. The use of this music is restricted because WELS Lutherans want to avoid worship that resembles entertainment. They are cautious about both overly subjective elements in worship and the use of music not quite worthy of divine worship. The musical arguments generated, in part, by the church growth movement have not been as painful for WELS Lutherans as for other Lutherans. But at least we thank the church growth movement for reinforcing the common-sense insight that we must offer quality worship planned with care." *The Complete Library of Christian Worship*. Volume 4: Music and the Arts in Christian Worship, p. 78-79.

¹⁹ Sasse, p. 24.

²⁰ As Schiller states it in his play *Mary Stuart*.

²¹ *Selected Writings of C. F. W. Walther: Law and Gospel*. Herbert J. A. Bouman, translator, p. 156-7.

²² *Selected Writings of C. F. W. Walther: Law and Gospel*. Herbert J. A. Bouman, translator, p. 155.

²³ Consider 2Co 1:18-20: "But as God is faithful, our word to you

was not Yes and No. For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was preached among you by us—by me, Silvanus, and Timothy—was not Yes and No, but in Him was Yes. For all the promises of God in Him are Yes, and in Him Amen, to the glory of God through us.”

²⁴ Routley. *The Divine Formula*, p. 74-75, ¶162.

²⁵ Canon Poole in the booklet “Evensong in Coventry Cathedral” quoted in Routley, *The Divine Formula*, page 95, ¶ 211.

²⁶ For further study I refer you to Pastor Alexander Ring’s excellent essay presented at the 1998 ELS General Pastoral Conference, available on the Internet through a link at: <http://www.blc.edu/comm/gargy/gargy1/M.DeGarmeaux.html>

²⁷ *Perikopen*. St. Louis: Druckerei der Synode Missouri . . . , 1872.

²⁸ Routley (*The Divine Formula*, p. 19-20 ¶ 42) relates a story about St. Chrysostom and preaching from the lectionary: “I am reminded of the great story of St. John Chrysostom, the great fourth-century preacher in Asia Minor whose sermons remain classics of their kind and always will. The people of his city and his church were in a condition of deep emergency. For some supposed offence against the will of that headstrong though often inspired emperor Theodosius they were in danger of being massacred by his troops. By some means a message got to the Emperor that caused him to stay his hand until their envoy had consulted with him. Tradition has it that the envoy was the aged priest Flavian, who journeyed all the way to Rome and back, and of course whose news of life or death could not be communicated to Chrysostom’s congregation until the double journey had been completed. The story is that during the time of profound anxiety Chrysostom, by preaching without deviating at any point from the prescribed lectionary, kept his people calm, dissuaded them from violent action against the troops of the Emperor, and preserved the peace until the news (which in the end was good) was delivered. There is no reason to disbelieve the substance of that. It was not necessary to preach a special series of sermons ‘on national emergency.’ The message was received and *translated*.

The ball was caught; people who could have degenerated into an angry and irrational mob stayed civilized.”

²⁹ *Selected Writings of C. F. W. Walther: Law and Gospel*. Herbert J. A. Bouman, translator, p. 156-7.

³⁰ Wouldn't it be wonderful if today we could say as boldly and honestly as our Lutheran fathers did: "Article XXIV (XII): Of the Mass. At the outset we must again make the preliminary statement that we do not abolish the Mass, but religiously maintain and defend it. For among us *masses are celebrated every Lord's Day and on the other festivals, in which the Sacrament is offered to those who wish to use it, after they have been examined and absolved*. And the usual public ceremonies are observed, the series of lessons, of prayers, vestments, and other like things" [Apology of the Augsburg Confession, *Triglotta*].

³¹ *Selected Writings of C. F. W. Walther: Law and Gospel*. Herbert J. A. Bouman, translator, p. 75.

³² Matthew 28:19.

³³ Titus 3:5.

³⁴ Matthew 26:26-28.

³⁵ Isaiah 55:11.

³⁶ Isaiah 35:3.

³⁷ Isaiah 42:3.

³⁸ See Appendix B.

³⁹ *Evangelical Lutheran Hymnary*, 315 and 318.

⁴⁰ Quoted in John Dahle's *Library of Christian Hymns*, a commentary on the *Lutheran Hymnary*.

⁴¹ *Selected Writings of C. F. W. Walther: Law and Gospel*. Herbert J. A. Bouman, translator, p. 50.

⁴² *An Explanation of Luther's Small Catechism*. Mankato, MN: Lutheran Synod Book Company, 1981, p. 31 §14.

⁴³ *Selected Writings of C. F. W. Walther: Law and Gospel*. Herbert J. A. Bouman, translator, p. 51.

⁴⁴ *Selected Writings of C. F. W. Walther: Law and Gospel*. Herbert J. A. Bouman, translator, p. 52.

⁴⁵ *Selected Writings of C. F. W. Walther: Law and Gospel*.

Herbert J. A. Bouman, translator, p. 189.

⁴⁶ *Selected Writings of C. F. W. Walther: Law and Gospel.*

Herbert J. A. Bouman, translator, p. 189.

⁴⁷ *Selected Writings of C. F. W. Walther: Law and Gospel.*

Herbert J. A. Bouman, translator, p. 190.

⁴⁸ *Selected Writings of C. F. W. Walther: Law and Gospel.*

Herbert J. A. Bouman, translator, p. 191-192.

⁴⁹ *Selected Writings of C. F. W. Walther: Law and Gospel.*

Herbert J. A. Bouman, translator, p. 192.

⁵⁰ The General Prayer takes about 2 or 3 minutes. There are other, better ways to shorten a service by that amount of time.

⁵¹ Matthew 6:7.

⁵² *Evangelical Lutheran Hymnary*, page 96.

⁵³ Pastor Alexander Ring in a personal correspondence. Used by permission.

⁵⁴ *Evangelical Lutheran Hymnary*, page 48.

⁵⁵ Backer, p. 63.

⁵⁶ *Evangelical Lutheran Hymnary*, #167.

Contemporary Musings on the Import of FC Article X

John A. Moldstad, Jr.

What really *is* an adiaphoron and what is it *not*? What are those things which God has not commanded nor forbidden and thus may be used with caution in the service of his kingdom? Are there congregational practices, liturgical arrangements, clerical vestments, or areas of private Christian living of which neither the embracing nor the shunning is sinful? If so, even these are not to be quickly dismissed with the flippant response, "If they are adiaphora, why be concerned?" When the apostle Paul in his first letter to the Christians at Corinth wrote, "*Everything is permissible* – but not everything is beneficial. *Everything is permissible* – but not everything is constructive (*οἰκοδομεῖ*). *Nobody should seek his own good, but the good of others*" (10:23, 24), was he not setting forth an essential distinction between the acknowledgment of adiaphora and the wisdom of using items so labeled?

Questions like these precipitate our study of the article in the Formula of Concord entitled: "Of Church Rites, Which are Commonly Called Adiaphora, or Matters of Indifference."

The Historical Setting of Article X

The primary impetus for the drafting of the documents culminating in the Bergen Book and ultimately the Solid Declaration of the Formula in 1577 was the Crypto-Calvinistic Controversy concerning the doctrine of the Lord's Supper (1560 - 1574). The two chief articles settling this controversy are the yeoman offerings of VII and VIII. Brilliantly and forcefully these articles expound the scriptural doctrines of the Real Presence and Christ's Two Natures. But, much as the Lord's Supper played a leading

role in the Formula's origin, an earlier historical development set the stage for dividing the Lutheran theologians into three camps: the Philippists (the Interimists; Melancthon's disciples), the gnesio-Lutherans (Flacius, Amsdorf, etc.) and the moderates (the confessionalists headed by Chemnitz and Andreae). The immediate fruits of the latter two groups' reaction to both the Augsburg (June of 1548) and the Leipzig (December of 1548) Interims, which were defended by Melancthon, can be found in FC X dealing with the entire subject of adiaphora.

It is the Adiaphoristic Controversy (1548 - 1555), as described in Article X, which is the initial controversy in a string of battles testing the mettle of orthodox Lutheranism subsequent to the death of the great reformer himself, Dr. Luther, in 1546. Wrapped up in the issues confronted by the authors of Article X was a host of concerns encroaching on numerous key doctrines of Scripture. Not simply the concept or doctrine of adiaphora in the pure sense of the term was at stake. All of Lutheran soteriology could have and would have evaporated if those we affectionately dub "concordianists" (the confessionalists) had not stepped up to the plate and delivered the day. The feisty Flacius of the gnesio camp also deserves special mention as rescuing Lutheranism from being obliterated by the noxious fog left behind by the Interims. F. Bente describes the document of the Leipzig Interim as being "in every respect a truce over the corpse of true Lutheranism." While the Interimists used the alleged adiaphora to sell their deal of compromise, "even the Lutheran *sola fide* was omitted in the article on justification. The entire matter was presented in terms which Romanists were able to interpret in the sense of their doctrine of 'infused righteousness, *iustitia infusa*.'" In a nutshell, the real problem with the stipulations of the Leipzig Interim was that Lutherans were expected to subscribe and to practice their worship in a spirit of compromise where compromise should never have been allowed. The Interims reintroduced into Lutheran Churches not only Roman Catholic customs but also Rome's doctrine.

The Issue in the Adiaphoristic Controversy

What was the main issue confronted and resolved by the gnesio Lutherans? It centered around this question: In a time when the doctrinal confession of the church is at stake, can Christians yield to persistent advocates of ceremonies or customs which at other periods of time (whether eras or hours) in church history would be viewed as normal adiaphora? More specifically, Bente posits the 1548 - 1555 *status controversiae* this way: "May Lutherans, under conditions such as prevailed during the Interim, when the Romanists on pain of persecution and violence demanded reinstatement of abolished papal ceremonies, even if the ceremonies in question be truly indifferent in themselves, submit with a good conscience, that is to say, without denying the truth and Christian liberty, without sanctioning the errors of Romanism, and without giving offense either to the enemies or to the friends of the Lutheran Church, especially its weak members? This [yielding to the enemies in matters of customs and ceremonies] was affirmed by the Interimists and denied by their opponents."²

Matthias Flacius Illyricus encapsulated the essence of what needed to be upheld by means of his familiar axiom: *Nihil est adiaphoron in casu confessionis et scandali* ("Nothing is an adiaphoron when confession and offense are involved"). In explaining the axiom, Prof. Kurt Marquardt states: "At a time of persecution, when the opponents seek to destroy the pure Gospel by force or trickery, one must make a clear confession and dare not yield even in such externals."³

While we today are apt to illustrate this principle by pointing to our Lutheran refusal – amidst pressure by the Anabaptists – to baptize by means of immersion⁴, Flacius and others in his day listed the following liturgical practices as examples: exorcism and other ceremonies of baptism, confirmation by bishops, auricular confession, extreme unction, episcopal ordination, the trappings of the mass, Corpus Christi festival, etc.⁵

Several arguments were advanced on the part of the Interimists in defending their approval of the agreement with Rome. Among these were: the contention that the weak would not be able to endure the persecution which would ensue; the ever-insidious choosing of the lesser of two evils; the example set by Luther in tolerating Romish customs; and even the gall of suggesting that a return to the Romish ceremonies would provide the ripe opportunity for proper instruction. Later in 1559 the Philippists (surprisingly!) actually used this latter argument for the reintroduction of Corpus Christi. They claimed they had reintroduced it "all the more readily in order that they might be able to instruct the people in the right use of the Sacrament and in the horrible abuses..."⁶ Melancthon felt that the Lutherans should bend on the ceremonial issues with the hope of at least being able to salvage *sola gratia*. But whether in the 1500s or on the verge of the second millennium, Christians must be well aware of the caveat: Gospel *reductionism* always results in Gospel *deductionism*.

Permit a brief digression on the reason why Luther's early Communion practice at Wittenberg (e.g., communing in one kind) was not comparable to the concessions made by the Interimists. The times and the conditions were drastically different. "Luther was dealing with Christians who in their consciences still felt bound to the Roman usages, while the weakness of the Adiaphorists is not an erring conscience, but fear of persecution. Moreover, Luther tolerated existing Romish ceremonies as long as there was hope of arriving at an agreement with the Romanists in doctrine, while the Adiaphorists reinstitute ceremonies which have been abolished, and this, too, in deference and obedience to irreconcilable adversaries of the truth."⁷ In short, the situation for Luther was that no demands were placed on him, no confession was at stake, and weak ones were being considered rather than promoters of heresy. In 1522 Luther had written: "And you must not throw these weak consciences into confusion, but bear with them and instruct them until they also become strong. . . Therefore, in such

a case, the law of love is to be preferred above the institution of both kinds. For Christ is more concerned about love than about the elements in the sacrament. . . . But this does not mean that one denies or condemns the use of the sacrament in both kinds; it simply means that love is something that lays us under obligation and compulsion whereas the reception of the sacramental elements is not a matter of compulsion” (LW 36, 255).⁸

The Criteria in Determining Adiaphora

The common definition of adiaphora is “things which are neither forbidden nor commanded by God in Scripture;” or, “things lying in the middle between God’s command and his prohibition” (German: *Mitteldinge*). This definition is tightened by ruling out specific times and circumstances when the expression “adiaphora” dare not apply (FC X, 4-7).

A ceremony/custom/item cannot be classified as an adiaphoron if the following conditions hold: a) It is contrary to the Word of God. b) It produces the appearance of unity when two opposing positions have not been brought into agreement. [This is precisely where the Interims were at fault!] c) It is a useless or foolish spectacle which does not serve good order.⁹

We could venture to supply examples of each of these above conditions respectively: a) when an erring church body forbids the use of alcohol; b) when there is an invitation to participate in the production of a hymnbook with a heterodox church body; and c) when a certain popular music piece expressing the generalities of love is desired to be sung at a church wedding.

Summation of Article X

The major points of FC Article X have been nicely summarized as follows:

- 1) Genuine adiaphora – such as ceremonies neither comanded nor forbidden by God’s Word – are not as such, nor in and of themselves, divine worship or any part of it. [FC X, 8]
- 2) “The church of God in every place and time” has the perfect right and authority to alter them so long as this is done without offense, in an orderly manner, so as to redound to the church’s edification. [FC X, 9]
- 3) “We believe, teach and confess” that at a time of confession (*in statu confessionis*), when the enemies of God’s Word seek to suppress the pure teaching of the holy Gospel, one must not give in *even* on matters which otherwise are truly adiaphora. [FC, 10 - 17] ¹⁰

The concluding paragraph of Article X has been viewed by many as being the most important. Although it does not speak directly to the most pressing issue confronting the Lutherans at the time the Formula was written, this paragraph [31] is quoted frequently in our circles today. It reads: “Thus [according to this doctrine] the churches will not condemn one another because of dissimilarity of ceremonies when, in Christian liberty, one has less or more of them, provided they are otherwise agreed with one another in the doctrine and in all its articles, also in the right use of the holy Sacraments, according to the well-known saying: *Dissonantia ieiunii non dissolvit consonantiam fidei*; ‘Dis-agreement in fasting does not destroy agreement in the faith.’”

This concluding paragraph of FC X serves as a reminder that “we should function as Christ’s church with a loving concern for others. Brotherly love will discourage us from insisting that our way is the only way or even the best way when it comes to adiaphora. The exercise of our Christian liberty, rightly done, does not disrupt Christian unity but fosters it.”¹¹

Current Debate on Liturgical Customs and Forms

Theologians who claim heritage with the church which bears the name of the great reformer have recognized that church rites and liturgical forms are matters of adiaphora. They are to be preserved for the sake of good order and for facilitating instruction but – in the appropriate words of an earlier Melanchthon – they are “not added because of the notion of righteousness or worship necessity.” Melanchthon went on to say, “We need to keep in mind that except for the matter of offense there is no sin in violating these traditions.”¹²

But we often hear strong opinions stressing the significance of observing particular well-ordered liturgies or ecclesiastical customs emanating from good Lutheran heritage. At a time when many under the infection of the “Church Growth” malady are clamoring for innovation and change, it is commendable that clergy and laity strive to maintain liturgical “decency and order.” More importantly, since in a number of cases the changes do not reflect the high Lutheran view of Word and Sacrament, our churches need to be urged more than ever to use orders which help preserve the authority and dignity of the means of grace, as well as the pious response on the part of the assembled believers. “While other forms of piety attempt to climb to heaven by achieving a certain state of spirituality, Lutheran piety centers around the reality of Christ present with his church in his Word and Sacrament.”¹³ Granting the fact that Lutherans will insist on sacramental (and thus, liturgical) worship, the *specific* liturgical forms – while adiaphora in themselves – are viewed as vehicles to set forth and highlight what consists of true *Gottesdienst*. The Augsburg Confession, Article XV, states: “Of usages in the church they teach that those ought to be observed which may be observed without sin, and which are profitable unto tranquillity and good order in the church. . .”

There is, however, a real danger that some may press

their opinions (on either side of the aisle, we might add) farther than simply being *opinions* or *commendable admonitions*.¹⁴ Just as one must be concerned about the errors of the Reformed dished out at the Sunday morning buffet of Church Growth, one must also guard against infringing on the realm of genuine Christian freedom. At the risk of appearing unsympathetic with worship styles and formats which are very conducive to means of grace theology, this writer will offer a few examples of what he perceives to be a case of “high church enthusiasm” (or more palatably: “high church confessionalism”) bordering on a denial of the Lutheran understanding of what constitutes adiaphora. These examples, I feel, can help illustrate the concern which has prompted our revisiting FC Article X.

In an essay presented at the Fourth Annual Symposium on Catechesis at Waukesha, Wisconsin, June 19-20, 1997, Dr. David Scaer takes issue with those who prefer modernizing the liturgy. He advocates restoring an interest in liturgies from older Lutheran tradition. He says, “Uneasiness about traditional liturgies accompanies a de-emphasis of the Sacraments and an increased stress on the Holy Spirit’s working. . . Sacraments are celebrated but can be done, so it is claimed, with only the raw verba stripped of liturgical flesh, which is consigned to the adiaphora pot. Instead of one church confessing the one faith which is after all what the liturgy preserves, the congregation is offered a Sunday morning buffet whose selections delight emotional tastes as they dull past liturgical memories. Sacraments are tolerable as long as they do not take center stage. They have a place, but at the same time they must keep their place.”¹⁵

Despite the legitimate complaint of numerous unLutheran practices going on in his LC-MS church body, is Dr. Scaer over-compensating? Does he not come close to (if not doing so actually) suggesting that any Lutheran churches today who do not follow TLH, pages 5 or 15, or ELH, pages 41, 60 and 88, or the corresponding pages in LW or CW, etc., but instead contemporize in some way, are automatically suspect of being less than truly

Lutheran? Don't get me wrong. Word and Sacrament are to be stressed. The fight against the inroads of destruction laid by Rationalism and Pietism, where the cry "Adiaphora!" may well have been used as a camouflage for the incubation of emotionalism, is a worthy and mandatory endeavor. However, in light of the way in which theologians such as Scaer use hyperbole ("Medieval worship has more to offer than 20th century creations.") in insisting on "high church" orders, one is moved to ask: Is liturgical form, then, no longer adiaphoristic?

Two other illustrations of this same approach may be seen, as found in the January 1995 issue of *Logia*. The issue contained several articles on the Lord's Supper. The Rev. Paul Harris in his "The Angels Are Aware... And We Are Too" lists reasons why he feels very forcefully that "the adoration of Christ in the Sacrament" (a testifying bowing, bending or kneeling) should be restored. His chief reason is that the practice, for which he acknowledges "there is no command in the Bible," can and must stand as a confession "against the Sacramentarians inside and outside of Lutheranism." Another article in the same *Logia* issue promotes "almost dogmatically" the use of the common cup. Prof. John Stephenson writes: "In confessional perspective it is difficult if not impossible to understand how the use of individual cups is reconcilable with the miracle of the consecration, the nature of the real presence, the implication of the Lutheran *hoc*, and the directives given in the letters to Simon Wolferinus. . ."

In both the Harris and Stephenson articles, the liturgical customs admittedly adiaphoristic *in and of themselves* are made to appear non-adiaphoristic in view of the confession which the Lutheran church today must make over against what is perceived to be Melancthonian and Reformed tendencies. The question once again can be asked, "Do we not as confessional Lutherans still maintain that clerical genuflecting (or, for that matter, the signing of the cross) and the common cup are in the realm of ecclesiastical adiaphora? Are we to buy the argument that the *in statu confessionis* exception in Article X has to apply whenever we

encounter congregations and pastors who prefer not to employ these liturgical customs? [We will address this question in a moment.] Furthermore, may it not often be the case that many congregations and pastors today do not employ these customs out of an equally confessional concern; namely, that Romanism might be fostered or at least implied?

Neo-Nomianism to be Avoided

Scripture warns against any attempts (even those with ostensibly impeccable intentions) to force the conscience on things which God has neither clearly mandated nor prohibited. The same holds true against all who construct a scaffold of liturgical litmus tests to ensure a so-called “greater orthodoxy.” But the apostle Paul’s injunction, “*Do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink. . .*” (Col. 2:16) stands as a rebuke of *all* efforts to invoke new ceremonial laws upon New Testament Christians – a kind of “neo-nomianism.” “*It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery*” (Gal. 5:1). In matters of adiaphora in the religious sphere, which includes such things as liturgical forms and vestments,¹⁶ Christians have proceeded with the evangelical attitude: “*And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him*” (Col. 3:17). The inspired directive in Romans 14 also speaks to this area of Christian freedom: “*Therefore let us stop passing judgment on one another. Instead, make up your mind not to put any stumbling block or obstacle in your brother’s way. . . Let us therefore make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification*” (vv. 13 & 19).

The Augsburg Confession

The seeds of what we find in Article X of the Formula are

already planted in the *Augustana*. A beautiful symmetry exists in the mind and confession of the reformers. There is a concerted effort made not to err in the realm of Christian freedom while at the same time maintaining confessionally Lutheran church rites and practices. We read: "Nevertheless, many traditions are kept on our part, which conduce to good order in the Church, as the Order of Lessons in the Mass and the chief holy-days. But, at the same time, men are warned that such observances do not justify before God, and that in such things it should not be made sin if they be omitted without offense. Such liberty in human rites was not unknown to the Fathers" (Art. XXVI, 40 - 42).

In Statu Confessionis

An argument is advanced by many today who wish to see confessional Lutheran churches in our country "return to" or retain liturgical forms and/or customs which were in vogue in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The line of reasoning goes: Normally, liturgical forms are treated as adiaphora, but because of the necessity today for the Lutheran Church to take its stand in waging the war against the influence of "Church Growth," and because of the need to make an unambiguous confession against Reformed and Crypto-Reformed theology, one can no longer say this is a matter of Christian freedom. The liturgies of the sixteenth century *must* be upheld. If they aren't, then churches either are not truly Lutheran or at best should be "suspect" of doing way too much "spoiling of the Egyptians" in the crypts of Fuller.

Is this a valid argument? Are we with *carte blanche* to eliminate the final paragraph in Article X of the Formula (the one allowing a "dissimilarity of ceremonies") by saying that it no longer applies? In order for an alleged adiaphoron to be entitled to the designation adiaphoron, it must be something (e.g., a ceremony) that is used as a means to convey a false doctrine or to give a false confession. Is it scriptural to assume that liturgies *not* formulated

according to a prescribed format or historical tradition are automatically in violation of the biblical and confessional doctrine of the means of grace? Such assumptions are not scripturally valid. Granted, some liturgies are doctrinally atrocious and have no place in the Lutheran worship service. But it is one thing to speak about Word and Sacrament (the substance¹⁷) as essential for worship services, and it is quite another to make the actual format and/or historical connections themselves a test to find reasons to be suspicious. "Therefore we reject and condemn as wrong when the ordinances of men in themselves are regarded as a service or part of the service of God" (FC X, 26). "[T]he people are instructed that such outward forms of service do not make us righteous before God and that they are to be observed without burdening consciences, which is to say that it is not a sin to omit them if this is done without causing scandal" (AC XXVI, 41, p. 70 in Tappert).

We must continue to press for things long labeled adiaphora truly to remain as matters open to Christian freedom, unless one can explicitly state that the confession of a doctrine from holy Scripture is on the line. Only in such a case could the intention of Article X in the Formula be invoked as a parallel.

Martin Luther, a man never accused of mincing words, drew the parameters sharply: In a sermon on Philippians 4:4-7 for the Fourth Sunday in Advent, he states: "To exercise our liberty in the observance of these commands [non-essential things], works no harm to faith nor to the Gospel; but to observe them by a forced act of obedience, destroys faith and the Gospel. The same rule applies to all external institutions and ordinances, as monastic vows and rules. They are in themselves but a matter of choice and are not opposed to faith or love. We should maintain the privilege of observing them in love and liberty, for the sake of our associates-to preserve harmony with them. But when it is insisted that certain ordinances must be honored, that their observance is an act of obedience essential to salvation, we should forsake cloisters, tonsures, caps, vows and rules, and even take

the opposite course, by way of testifying that only faith and love are the Christian essentials and it is our privilege to observe or omit all other things, being controlled by love and our associations. To conform to laws in a spirit of love and liberty works no harm, but to conform through necessity and forced obedience is to be condemned. Let this rule apply to ceremonials, hymns, prayers and all other cathedral ordinances, so long as they are observed as a matter of love and liberty alone. Only for the service and for the enjoyment of the assembled company are they to be observed, and that when they are works not in themselves evil. When urged as inherently essential, we are to refrain; we must oppose them in order to maintain the liberty of faith.”¹⁸

Conclusion

From our study of Article X in the Formula of Concord, and in reaction to some of the hyperbolic rhetoric used in support of “high liturgical practices,” we might offer the following points to serve as a guide for a proper understanding of ecclesiastical adiaphora in our circles:

1. It is important that liturgy reflect the high view of the right use of the proclamation of the Word and the administration of the Sacraments in the Lutheran Church.
2. Liturgical forms and traditions are in themselves adiaphora (indifferent matters), not to be abused by incorrectly presenting law and gospel or detracting from the means of grace, nor to be abused by infringing on the freedom of Christians to choose their own God-pleasing worship rites.
3. The claim that certain rites *must* be used in Lutheran worship services since the present time demands a confession,

and that therefore liturgy has to be removed from the long-standing list of adiaphora, cannot be demonstrated as an *exact* parallel to the situation addressed in FC Article X.

4. Imposing *coercively* a pristine liturgical rite as a way to better “Lutheranize” churches is a subtle attack on the very Gospel which the Lutheran Church seeks to uphold. This also holds true for forcefully imposing a demand for a certain frequency of Communion or the demand that private confession be restored as a formal practice prior to Communion. Christian freedom matters dare not be twisted neo-nomistically into New Testament ceremonial laws, no matter how noble the intentions. [The incident of Peter at Antioch, as recorded in Galatians 2:11-2, must be kept in mind.]

5. It is commendable when pastors and professors (especially those with expertise and interest in liturgy) share their strong *opinions* on what forms of liturgy the church should use. It is another thing, however, to say or to insinuate that the church *must* use such forms. Persuasion in matters of adiaphora through the sharing of ideas is the proper approach, whereas coercive and inflammatory language destroys the Gospel. The Lutheran liturgy always lies in tension between preserving our Lutheran practice, heritage or worship while seeking to speak and relate to modern man.

6. The Lord Jesus wants us to “*make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace*” (Eph. 4:3). True unity demands vigilance on both ends: When doctrine is at stake, no adiaphora claim can apply. But when only adiaphora are at stake, the doctrine of Christian freedom must apply.

Endnotes

¹ F. Bente, *Historical Introductions to the Symbolical Books of the Evangelical Lutheran Church* (Concordia Triglotta edition; St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1921), p. 99.

² Bente, p. 108.

³ R. Preus and W. Rosin, eds., *A Contemporary Look at the Formula of Concord* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1978), p. 261.

⁴ Another present day illustration of Lutheran refusal to practice an adiaphoron because of insistence by the heterodox is not "breaking" the bread in Communion as a protest against the Reformed.

⁵ Bente, p. 107.

⁶ Bente, p. 110.

⁷ Bente, p. 111.

⁸ Luther's "Receiving Both Kinds in the Sacrament" of 1522 is written to discourage hasty reform in the way in which the Sacrament is administered.

⁹ Bjarne Teigen, *I Believe: A Study of the Formula of Concord* (Mankato, MN: Lutheran Synod Book Co., 1977), p. 17.

¹⁰ Preus and Rosin, article by Marquardt, pp. 262 - 265.

¹¹ William Fischer, *Christian Freedom* (Milwaukee: Northwestern Pub. House, 1996), p. 106.

¹² Philip Melanchthon, *Loci Communes (1543)*, J. Preus trans. (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1992), p. 232.

¹³ Harold Senkbeil, *Sanctification: Christ in Action* (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1991), p. 165.

¹⁴ An article entitled "In Defense of High Church Men" by Rev. Rolf Preus as found in the June 22, 1988 *Christian News* (pp. 9 - 10) has much to say in support of those who wish to promote a "high church" appearance. But he also gives warning:

"When we have the mass invasion of anti-creedal, anti-

confessional, anti-Lutheran, anti-Christian, Church Growth fanaticism into formerly conservative Lutheran congregations, the solution is not building confessionals and teaching the kids how to cross themselves! The solution is not to displace the doctrine of justification as the article on which the Church stands by replacing it with incoherent mumblings about incarnational this or sacramental that, while the laity never quite figure out what you're talking about. I would plead with all of the liturgically correct High Church pastors to consider that their best allies in the fight against Church Growthism, unionism, liberalism, and the invasion of the Arminian model in our Lutheran parishes are the Bronze Age laymen who perhaps don't want Communion every Sunday, and perhaps think you're silly to make such a big deal about private confession and absolution because they know (even if you don't!) that it just won't fly with folks today. Please don't judge them to be less than Lutheran! They are Lutheran! They may not know as much theology as you, but they know more than you about people, and life, and the way things work in this life. They know that, regardless of how you present it, new is new is new, and new is according to the experience of those who've never done it before!

“When I talk to bright and committed Lutheran laymen who have been led to believe that various liturgical practices unknown among conservative Lutherans in America two generations ago actually distinguish true Lutherans from others, I ask what gives any pastor the right to go into a parish and make as the test of orthodoxy what is not clearly established in the Bible? From the point of view of the layman who has come to know his Lord through the liturgical forms which he has inherited, the liturgically correct High Church pastor who presumes to ‘educate’ the congregation on the ‘proper’ way to worship (as if they have had it all wrong for generations) is just as obnoxious as the Church Growth jackass who comes in and throws out the liturgy altogether.”

¹⁵ “The Art of Catechesis,” an essay by Dr. David P. Scaer, professor at Concordia Seminary in Fort Wayne, Indiana.

¹⁶ C. F. W. Walther, *Pastoral Theology*, J. Drickamer trans. (New Haven, MO: Lutheran News, Inc., 1995), p. 35.

¹⁷ This writer is not using the word “substance” in the manner in which David S. Luecke uses it in his 1988 CPH publication, *Evangelical Style and Lutheran Substance*. He mixes Evangelical style and substance with the sacramental substance of Lutheranism. As a result, Lutheran theology is sacrificed at the altar of expediency. The whole concept of *Gottesdienst* (God at work in the service through his means of grace) receives scant attention by Luecke.

¹⁸ The translation is taken from the J. N. Lenker 1908 edition of “Luther’s Epistle Sermons”, p.99. The German can be found in the St. Louis ed. XII, p. 87.

Indigenous Method as Mission Goal (Raising a Vivacious Daughter)

by Timothy E. Erickson

While I was considering the call to Peru over 16 years ago, I visited a former missionary to Peru. He encouraged me to accept the call, telling me to go to Peru and "Give 'em . . . heaven!" On saying this, he was really describing the goal of every missionary. Our ultimate goal is to get people into heaven. We set other subsidiary goals in order to more efficiently accomplish that ultimate goal, but, in an absolute sense, it is our only goal. It is the purpose for which the Christian Church exists. Our Foreign Mission handbook states, "Our one objective (I believe objective and goal mean the same thing.) is to preach the Gospel of salvation to all nations."¹ Everything that we do in mission work ought to be a means to achieving that goal (objective).

The sum of all those who believe the gospel that is preached forms the Holy Christian Church. This Church will always become established as a result of mission work. God says that his Word "will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it" (Isaiah 55:11). The purpose of that Word is to announce the Good News to every human being so that people will believe. The Church consists of those believers. So mission work results in the Church.

The Establishment of Congregations as Mission Goal

Some people use this teaching in order to deny the necessity of forming a group that meets here on earth. Many times in my ministry I have heard people say, "I can be a Christian

without going to church.” There is a certain sense in which that is true. It is not going to church that makes us Christians. But a Christian will want to go to church. He will want to go to church because God commands it and he will want to go to church for his own good and for the good of others. Our ELS Catechism has a question which asks, “What is the purpose of Christians uniting in such outward fellowship?” The answer is, “Christians unite in order to preserve the means of grace pure and unadulterated, to use the means of grace for their own edification, to show the unity that exists among them, and to join hands in bringing the good news of salvation in Christ to others.”² The church exists in order to get people into heaven, which is our ultimate goal in missions.

Since the church exists in order to get people into heaven, the establishment of the church is necessary. Therefore missionaries have as a goal the gathering of the people that they have evangelized into a congregation or congregations. “We seek to achieve our objective through establishing congregations with pastors and teachers, ‘to prepare God’s people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining the full measure of perfection found in Christ’ (Ephesians 4:12-13).”³ The congregation exists for my own benefit, my “own edification,” as we see in a well known Bible passage, “Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another – and all the more as you see the Day approaching” (Hebrews 10:25). No one should think that he can face the temptations of this life alone, especially as we near the end of time. The congregation will help me to stay on the path to heaven through the Means of Grace that are used there.

The congregation also exists in order to spread the Gospel to others, “to join hands in bringing the good news of salvation in Christ.” We see this in Peter’s description, “you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out

of darkness into his wonderful light" (I Peter 2:9).

In our circles it has been common practice that missionaries form congregations. We do not look with favor upon itinerant missionaries who spend a few days in one place and a few in another, preaching, but not feeding those new born Christians that may be produced through their preaching. A few years ago I came to know a family of these missionaries. They were spending a month in Peru visiting orphanages and preaching to the children. One letter I received from them told of a visit they made. They explained the reception they had received by stating that there were now over 100 more people on the way to heaven. They spent one day in the orphanage and then left the city, without leaving those "new Christians" in the spiritual care of anyone. I don't believe that I could say with any degree of certainty that any of those 100 orphans have remained in the faith and are still on the path to heaven due to the work of those missionaries. Congregations are formed in order to get people on the way to heaven and keep them on that way during their whole lives and in order to place their children, grandchildren, great grandchildren and all future generations on that way. With the forming of congregations, the work is expanded to be able to do more than one missionary can do. It is expanded to include an influence that goes beyond his time on the mission field, and even beyond his lifetime on earth and beyond the time when foreign missionaries will be present in a place.

(Of course, this does not mean that we seek only people who can contribute to the welfare of a congregation. There will always be those who lack the intelligence or the ability to contribute. There will be the retarded, the mentally ill, the indigent, the extremely poor, those who are in the gutters of life. Our Christian compassion demands that we minister to them, too, although they may never form a part of any Christian congregation. However, we will always be seeking ways to incorporate those we evangelize into a congregational group.)

The Indigenous Church as Mission Goal

Since we want this Church to go on getting people into heaven after we are no longer here, (we cannot think that the church will always have gringo missionaries to serve it), we work toward establishing an indigenous church. In considering this, we really have to modify the basic meaning of the word indigenous. In the dictionary it is defined as "having originated in and being produced, growing, living, or occurring naturally in a particular region or environment."⁴ "Innate" and "inborn" are given as synonyms. Christianity does not originate anyplace on earth, nor is it "produced, growing, living or occurring naturally" any place on earth. Christianity comes only from God. It originates with him in heaven. It was his idea, not that of any man. It is a result of God's love and mercy toward men, rather than the result of any efforts on the part of man. It is produced only by the Means of Grace that he has given. It grows through those Means of Grace. It is living only in the sense that he gives it life. It occurs only where he wishes it to occur. It is not innate or inborn in any man. We are born sinners, and only God can make us into Christians. The Christian faith and its doctrine are not indigenous to earth.

When we speak of an indigenous church, then, of what are we speaking? We are speaking of a Christian church that is no longer thought of as foreign by its members, but has become accepted as something that is theirs. It is their church. It is no longer the church of the missionaries. We have had experiences of that in Peru. When people first come into contact with the mission, they often speak of what the missionaries can or should do. As time passes, they start using the word "we" when they talk about what the church as an organization can and should do. When they have thoroughly integrated into their thoughts and feelings that they are the church, it has become indigenous to them. It could be said that the Christian church has then become a part of their culture. It might not be part of the culture of the whole na-

tion, but it is part of the culture of the individuals and groups that have accepted it.

In speaking of this church and its members, we would probably be more accurate if we spoke of the Christianization of the local culture rather than the indigenization of the Christian church. When we enter a culture, we are bringing Christianity. The only thing we want to accomplish is to make the people Christian. As we look at what happens to them, we see changes. These changes are things in their culture that were opposed to or things that were unable to adapt to Christianity. To form an indigenous church we want to leave everything else alone or only modify it in order to fit our Christian principles.

The church can be indigenous on different levels. First of all, we want to establish indigenous congregations. We want people to have their local group that they call their own, in which they participate. This group will have a pastor who is "in harmony with its cultural and economic background."⁵

On another level, we also want to establish a national indigenous church, in which congregations work together with each other in order to carry on the Lord's work. We will thus work toward establishing an organization such as a synod. On yet another level, we can think of the desirability of international cooperation through organizations such as the Confessional Evangelical Lutheran Conference.

The indigenous church has been described in different ways. One of the most common is our description of the four "selves," self propagating, self supporting, self administering, self disciplining.

Self propagating refers to the acquisition of new members. In the beginning of mission work this is done by missionaries. We want our national members to be the ones who evangelize in their own neighborhoods, in their own cities, in their own land. We want the church to keep on acquiring new members after the missionaries are gone.

Self supporting refers to the maintenance of the church

organization, usually by means of finances. We want the church to be able to keep operating and even thriving and expanding its operations after there is no more money or resources coming in from outside the country.

Self administering refers to the ability of the members to make their own decisions. They are able to plan, budget and implement actions which will lead to the further development and growth of their church and its members.

Self disciplining refers to the ability to judge the doctrine and life of its members and to carry out the correction of error. We want a church that can look at different doctrines and lives and be able to distinguish between what is Christian and what is non-Christian.

We can understand the indigenoussness of the church a little better by describing what we do not want. One thing we do not want is to convert the national church to our culture. Paul said, "Though I am free and belong to no man, I make myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible. To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law. To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some" (I Corinthians 9:19-23). He wasn't trying to turn the church into copies of himself. He was trying to turn them into Christians. Our goal is not to change the members of our church into North Americans. It is to change the people of different countries into Christians.

Another thing that we do not want is unnecessary dependence. Not all dependence is bad. We want our people to depend upon God. Unnecessary dependence does not lead to maturity.

Because we want to establish an indigenous church for the good of the church and its members and for the spreading of the Gospel, we will put into practice methods that will lead toward that goal.

Indigenous Method as Mission Goal

In order to establish such a church, we work with an indigenous method. The indigenous method consists in the actions that the missionaries take in order to establish an indigenous church.

What is it that missionaries do in order to work with an indigenous method? One of the first things we do upon entering a foreign country is learn the language. We also study the culture to see how things are done. In doing this we begin to respect the culture and people. We may be amazed at what they are able to accomplish as they live among and communicate with those of their own culture. We will also learn about things in the culture that need study on the part of its own people to see whether they are able to be used by Christians or not.

Our attitudes toward a culture and its people do manifest themselves, in spite of our efforts to cover up undesirable attitudes. Therefore we will want to do what we can to cultivate a positive, happy attitude toward our work with the people. "The respect that we show toward Peruvian customs and attitudes can have a positive effect on the attitudes that they express toward things Peruvian."⁶ Most people are more likely to respond to a message presented in a positive way than in a negative way. We have a positive message in the Gospel. We also have to make use of that.

We need to instill in the people a desire to have an indigenous church. It may be that the mission board and the missionaries desire an indigenous church, but the people of a nation would rather keep their dependence on the mission and missionaries. We need to show them the advantages, benefits and blessings for them in an indigenous church. We want the church to be a church of conviction rather than just a church of convenience for them.⁷

We make sure that what we are teaching is Christian doctrine from the Bible, rather than our own opinions and cultural feelings. We have to be very careful about the things that we do,

making sure the people understand the difference between our Christian faith and the culture in which we bear it so that they can understand the difference between their Christian faith and the culture in which they bear it.

We seek to increase the credibility of our national leaders. We show trust in our national leaders, so that their members will learn to trust them also. We may have to step into the background and let the national leaders take over without constant instructions from us. In a study on credibility on the mission field which I finished in 1989, I made the following points, which I quote:⁸ "We will do what we can to cause the parishioners to think well of their Peruvian national leader, to be as proud to have him as leader as they are to have the missionary present." "We can do this by fostering pride in their nation, in themselves, and by deferring to the Peruvian leader whenever possible in the presence of his members for answers to questions, recommendations for action, and even in church rites such as baptisms and confirmations" (this was written before we had ordained pastors in Peru). "If he makes some error, we will speak with him privately and have him correct the error in his dealings with his members." Our Handbook also states, "The missionary will not 'duplicate the student's practical-level work in the student's parish'⁹ as if to say that the work of the student lacked something that the missionary's work does not." And, "The missionary should, as far as possible, keep a low profile in the student's practical work and be decreasingly visible to the members of the parish as the student's practical experience, proficiency and knowledge increase."¹⁰

We seek to attach our members to God's Word rather than to an individual missionary or even an individual national pastor. In the experience of some missions (including ours) there is loss of membership when one missionary is replaced by another. It is not easy to transfer membership from one man to another in the mission field. The people are often new converts, converted due to the work of one man. They have developed such a loyalty to that man that they cannot accept the leadership of his replace-

ment. We consciously work so that they will accept the Word of God taught by any missionary. "We do this by placing the emphasis on the message rather than on the messenger. Our purpose is to lift up Christ before the people who hear our message. If lifting up someone else is one way to do that, then we will lift up the other person, increase his credibility, in order to lift up Christ through his work. It is really not very important to us if that person is less or more influential than we are."¹¹

We don't do for the people what they can do for themselves. We do for them what they cannot do and we help them to learn to do it for themselves. It is easy for a missionary to develop the idea that he needs to do as much for the people as possible. This has led to dependence and also to problems between missionaries, when one missionary's successor would not do the things he had done. A judgment has to be made as to what is really in the best interest of an independent people and an independent church.

We try to develop a partnership between the national church and the mission. There is a distinction that will be maintained, but these two different types of ministry work together in order to develop the church. Eventually the mission may cease to exist as the national church itself becomes a missionary sending group and no longer needs missionaries to be sent to it.

In operating with an indigenous method, we have to remember that our first goal is to make Christians. Therefore we cannot accept anything in the local culture that conflicts with our Christian faith. Recently I studied marital problem counseling and premarital counseling with our seminary students in Peru. We went through the ideals of Christian marriage and a comment from one of the students was, "You don't understand how it is in Peru!" I told them that I understood perfectly well how it was in Peru, and that we had to be the ones to educate our people so that they could change. Once I was talking to a missionary leader of another church body who said that two Peruvian men were fighting it out to see who would become the pastor of a certain congrega-

tion. I asked him what would happen to the loser. He said that he would leave in shame and disgrace. He then said, "I guess that I will just have to let them fight it out. That is the Peruvian way." My response was, "But that is not the Christian way." In trying to establish an indigenous church with an indigenous method, we must remember that our first and ultimate goal is to make Christians of the people and set them on the road to heaven. We are not here primarily to establish an organization that will run like any other earthly organization in the country in which we find ourselves.

The opposite of an indigenous method would be a method which causes dependence. It is nice to be wanted, but we must encourage the national members of our churches toward independence for their own good. A mother bird pushes her chicks out of the nest. A human parent encourages his children to think for themselves, to get a job, to earn their own living, to establish their own home, in other words, to get along without their parents. It is the same with the church. We would be harming the church by keeping it dependent upon us missionaries.

Some dependence may be necessary for a time. We always want our people to be dependent upon God. In order for that to happen, they may have to depend upon us to tell them what God says, until they can judge for themselves. There may be necessary financial dependence for a time in a mission field. They may have to depend on our organization until they become organized themselves (i.e., all chapels in Peru are legally owned by the mission.). But our goal is to lead them to more and more independence as time goes on, to make the church more and more the church of the national people, to make the church indigenous.

The Case of Peru

We have been doing mission work in Peru for 30 years. From the beginning the goal has been to establish a national church

that will be able to function without the presence of missionaries. Through the years steps have been taken to put into operation a truly national church in Peru. The very first missionary began the task of seeking Peruvian leadership for the church. The second missionary called to Peru was called for the purpose of establishing a seminary for the training of national leadership.

This first seminary training revolved around a method that was meant to keep the church as indigenous as possible. The idea was to keep the church indigenous rather than have to make it indigenous at a later time.

The method used was Theological Education by Extension (TEE). This way of teaching the leaders of the church kept them in their own homes, in their own hometowns, in their own region, in their own country. They did not change lifestyles. It was meant to have as little effect as possible on their culture and way of life. The only new thing in their life would be the truth of the Gospel and Bible teachings.

The method also meant that leaders would arise out of their local situations. No pastor would be placed into a congregation from outside. The people would see their pastor being trained. They would see that he continued to be one of them, to live like them. They would see his growth and example for the whole flock.

This method resulted in the rising of several very gifted men who became leaders in their congregations almost from the beginning of their membership in the church. Perhaps the best known and most obvious of these was Fidel Convercio, who cared spiritually for his flock long before he was ordained and began to receive financial assistance from the mission (I'll get to that in a minute.). Roberto Berrospid (in Reynoso, Lima) and Abraham Rosario (who assisted Fidel Convercio in the mountain town of Pacllón.) were also actively involved in spiritual care before they were ordained. These three men, along with Segundo Gutierrez and Braulio Capulián, were the first group to enter into full time seminary studies.

A drawback to this method was time. The men worked full-time in other professions. They studied on their own and took care of a congregation. Their course work did not advance very quickly. In some circumstances this may be acceptable, as it was for a time in Peru. We are preparing people for eternity. We want a church that will outlast the missionaries. Therefore, we carefully prepare the base in the first generation.

In Peru, this time element became a risk, however. In the late 1980's the terrorist group Sendero Luminoso was on the rise. The chances seemed to be increasing that this group would take over the political power in the country. It was decided to speed up the training of national leaders in case the missionaries were required to leave Peru. The decision was made to invest a good sum of money into the training of these first five men by taking them out of their jobs, and in some cases out of their towns, in order to get them well-trained as quickly as possible. It could be said that one element (one "self") of our indigenous method, that of spending little money in order to make the church self-supporting, was sacrificed in order to speed up other elements, that of training national pastors to lead national flocks of Christians so that they could be self-administering, self-propagating and self-disciplining.

These five men were brought into Lima (where Roberto Berrospid and Braulio Capulián already lived) for a period of two years of intensive, full-time seminary study. They did not need three years because they had already completed many studies by extension and because they did not take summer vacations during that two year period. They were told that at the end of the two year period they would be expected to return to their jobs and earn their own living.

Because of the deteriorating economic situation in Peru, it was decided to support them also during a one year vicarage, as part of their pastoral training. During this year they received pastoral experience full-time under the guidance of one of the missionaries (each student serving under a specified missionary). They

continued to receive a subsidy as a full-time worker.

During the vicar year the decision was made to keep on paying them with mission funds as full-time pastors. They were not called by the mission. Every ordained pastor has received a call from a local congregation. In that call the congregation commits itself to do what it can in order to give support to the physical needs of its pastor. But the poverty is great, so, financially, the church in Peru is not yet indigenous.

In other aspects, though, having a full-time native pastorate has aided the indigenization of the church. Except for their pastor's salary and in some cases help to obtain a place to worship, the congregations in Reynoso, North San Gabriel (where Andrés Robles was installed as pastor in 1997), Tahuantinsuyo (which has no building), Coris, Pacllón and Llamac are independent. Under the guidance of their pastor they are self-administering, self-propagating and self-disciplining. They also take care of their own expenses locally. The congregations in Chimbote, Puente Piedra, Ancón, Año Nuevo, Pocpa and Chiquián have needed occasional help from the mission in order to pay local expenses (usually their electric bill, or help with lighting where there is no electricity). Other congregations are just in their beginning stages.

Congregational finances have been recognized by the missionaries as a weakness, and we are constantly encouraging the congregations toward independence, and even toward some financial contribution toward the salary of their pastor. When Andrés Robles was called, ordained and installed as pastor in North San Gabriel last year, this congregation became the first to agree to pay its pastor a specified amount toward his salary.

We have recently seen more of an interest on the part of the pastors in the affairs of their synod. Some were candidates for offices in the recent elections. (Some laymen don't want the pastors running things, so no pastor was elected, but their interest is increasing.) They have been serving as guides to the board that was elected. The people in the churches are seeing this interest on the part of their pastors, and it appears that interest in the

affairs of a national church is growing in Peru.

As we look at this, we remember the theme of this conference, "Maturing in Missions." God wants his people to mature, to press on, to be sanctified, becoming better and better each day. They do this in connection with their local congregations and their synods. We want individuals to mature because that is what God wants and that is what is in their best interests. For the same reasons, we want our national churches to mature and enter fully into all the work that God has placed before them in this world.

(A note on the subtitle of this paper: In 1867 Pastor H.A. Preus of the 14-year-old Norwegian Synod made a trip to Norway to recruit new pastors for the church in America. He was asked many questions about the synod in the United States, so he presented a series of seven lectures on the synod. He called the synod in America a "vivacious daughter" of the mother church in Norway. The Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Peru is a daughter of our Evangelical Lutheran Synod in the United States. We are attempting to raise a "vivacious daughter" in Peru.)

Endnotes

- ¹ Foreign Mission Policy Handbook of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod, p. 6.
- ² *An Explanation of Dr. Martin Luther's Small Catechism*, 1981. Lake Mills, Iowa: Graphic, p. 149, question 201.
- ³ Handbook, p.6.
- ⁴ *Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary*, 1988. Springfield, Massachusetts: Merriam Webster, p. 614.
- ⁵ Olsen, James, *A Salaried Versus an Unsalariated Peruvian Public Ministry*, 1986. Paper for Lima Conference.
- ⁶ Erickson, Timothy, 1989. *Recommendations* (from a study of Credibility on the mission field). Directed Study for Master of Arts degree, p. 6.
- ⁷ This distinction was gathered from a paper by Leyrer, Carl, 1989. *Colombia - Part II*. Presented at the WELS Latin American Missionaries Conference.
- ⁸ Erickson, 1989. pp. 7-8.
- ⁹ Handbook, p. 13.
- ¹⁰ Handbook, pp. 13 & 14.
- ¹¹ Erickson, 1989. p. 8

Book Review:

Galatians

Ephesians

J. A. Moldstad, Jr.

Armin J. Panning, *Galatians, Ephesians*. Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1997. 222 pages.

Order from our Bethany College Bookstore at
1-800-944-1722. Price: \$10.99

Next to Paul's letter to the Romans, the letters to the Galatians and to the Ephesians rank high on the list of the most doctrinal epistles penned by the one whom God chose to be "the apostle to the Gentiles." Because of the amount of spiritual meat in each of these letters, one might wonder why the editors of the *People's Bible* commentary series opted to cover them in one volume. The case could be made that each of these epistles merits its own special treatment.

But there is a very important link between the two, even as each letter retains its own thematic emphasis. Galatians treats of justification, and Ephesians focuses on the church. Yet the church can exist only when justification is presented properly. As our Lutheran confessors put it, it is "the article by which the church stands or falls" (*articulus stantis et cadentis ecclesiae*). Galatians deals with the specific question of whether salvation is by faith alone, apart from the addition of any works of man, including Old Testament ceremonial laws intended only for the Jews under the old covenant. Ephesians explains how the unity of the church is exhibited by the fact that both Jews and Gentiles are saved in the same way: through faith in Christ. Both letters, then, show how there is "an equality that exists between forgiven sin-

ners.”

The author of this recent edition of the *People's Bible* series explains the connection between Galatians and Ephesians on pages 157 and 158. He writes: “To the Galatians Paul wrote, ‘You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus’ (Galatians 3:26-28). Paul says the same thing here to the Ephesians, ‘Through him [Christ] we both [Jews and Gentiles] have access to the Father by one Spirit.’ That insight has major implications for the relationship of Jews and Gentiles to one another in the Christian church.”

Readers of *Galatians*, *Ephesians* will truly be edified. The book does an admirable job of gleaning helpful insights for the average reader of the Bible who is not familiar with the original Greek. This comes as no surprise to anyone who has had the privilege of sitting at the feet of the author in the exegetical classroom, either at Northwestern College or at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary. As an example of Professor Panning's expertise in the original language, we refer to his comment under Ephesians 4:19, where the apostle discusses how hardened the heathen (Gentiles) have become in their unbelief and immorality. Panning states: “Although it is not evident from the NIV translation, in the Greek ‘*having lost* all sensitivity’ is an active form of the verb. It is not that their sensitivity was taken from them; they abandoned it. The next clause also has an active verb: ‘They have given themselves over to sensuality.’ The Gentiles did what they wanted to, but, instead of satisfying them, it simply heightened their desire for more. Paul's point is that Gentiles in their pagan lifestyle were hopelessly enmeshed in immoral ways” (p. 188).

In his remarks on Galatians, the author consistently and rightfully points out that, even though Paul was dealing here in Galatia with the heretics' demands of a *specific kind* of law (the ceremonial) as it threatened salvation by faith alone, the subject of

any law encroaching on being saved by faith alone is really addressed in this epistle. "In this case conformity to the Mosaic Law was demanded, but 'merit' earned by adherence to any other legal pattern would have been just as damaging. We need to keep that in mind to understand Paul's blanket criticism of 'law works.' Any deeds done to gain God's favor are worthless, yes, worse than worthless. They are damning because they separate people from their only hope, the merits of Christ that are received by faith" (p. 51).

Following the pattern of the *People's Bible* series, one does not find many quotes from other sources in *Galatians*, *Ephesians*. This absence makes for easier reading and helps one devote attention simply to scrutinizing the Scripture verses themselves. However, since *Galatians* (as noted by Prof. Panning) was so near and dear to Luther that he called it his "Katherine von Bora," one might hope to find at least a brief quotation or two from *Luther's Works*, volumes 26 & 27. Luther's commentary on *Galatians* is regarded as one of his best writings on the doctrine of justification. For instance, Luther's statement on objective justification under Gal. 1:4 is a real gem: "Especially practice this pronoun 'our' in such a way that this syllable, once believed, may swallow up and absorb all your sins, that is, that you may be certain that Christ has taken away not only the sins of some men but your sins and those of the whole world. The offering was for the sins of the whole world, even though the whole world does not believe" (*LW* 26, p. 38).

Pastors can heartily recommend to their people *all* of the current volumes of the *People's Bible* series. *Galatians*, *Ephesians* especially ought to be one of the firsts on that list. Not only is the subject matter of these two epistles imperative for Christians' edification, but also the comments offered by Prof. Panning drive the reader to ponder ever so carefully the exact wording of these Pauline letters as set forth by God the Holy Spirit.

Book Review:

Pastoral Care Under the Cross: God in the Midst of Suffering

by Thomas L. Rank

Richard C. Eyer, *Pastoral Care Under the Cross: God in the Midst of Suffering*. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1994. 155 pages.

Order from our Bethany College Bookstore at
1-800-944-1722. Price: \$11.00

Richard Eyer is the director of pastoral care at Columbia Hospital in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. His book deals with a number of critical times in people's lives, times in which they need care for their souls.

This book is not a textbook on pastoral theology *per se*, but its opening chapters lay a wonderful foundation for pastoral care. The Introduction and 4 chapters of Part 1, "The Context of Pastoral Care Today," demonstrate the importance of the cross of Jesus Christ for pastoral care. The chapters are: The Cross as Paradigm for Pastoral Care; The Pastor as Cross-bearer; Suffering, Sickness, and the Cross; and Faith, Healing, and the Cross.

While courses in psychology have become the norm in many seminaries' departments of pastoral theology, psychology remains peripheral (but not completely unimportant) to the work of care of souls. The author makes the important distinction between psychology and pastoral care:

..pop psychology offers easy answers of a quasispiritual nature aimed merely at making people feel good about themselves regardless of deeper ills. Because deeper

ills remain unresolved, the soul remains ill, and self-care turns into preoccupation with self rather than moving the self to care for others (14).

In contrast:

Pastoral care moves beyond the scope of psychology, since psychology cannot direct us to forgiveness received from the One who alone heals us completely. Pastoral care is unique. It does not derive its substance from the culture nor its legitimacy from the medical profession (23).

This distinction between true pastoral care and psychology is based on the theology of the cross, the unique message of the Christian Church. "The theology of the cross says that God comes to us through weakness and suffering, on the cross and in our own sufferings" (27). "The goal of pastoral care under the cross is not to try to eliminate suffering but to point the parishioner to God in the midst of suffering" (33). It is with this understanding that Eyer directs his attention to Part 2 of his book, "The Cross in Action: Practical Pastoral Care in Specific Circumstances."

Part 2 includes chapters on the following: the elderly, AIDS, dying, mourners, mental illness, depression, and medical ethics. Interspersed throughout each chapter are short episodes from the author's own work as a hospital chaplain. These episodes provide insight into the application of the theology of the cross to people at the threshold of life. Included in the chapter on mental illness is a short list of mental disorders. Eyer notes, "As Christians called to be 'in the world but not of the world,' we must understand mental illness in spiritual as well as psychological terms in order to recognize what we have to offer the mentally ill in the name of Jesus Christ" (116). Psychology as a tool is not rejected, but kept in its rightful place.

Of interest right now is the topic addressed in the last chapter, medical ethics. Eyer returns to three “-isms” he identified earlier as major parts of how our culture thinks: individualism, relativism and utilitarianism. Applied to medical ethics, these three “-isms” result in the acceptance of such practices as euthanasia. The author identifies these obstacles, and applies the theology of the cross to the questions of ethics.

Many pastors may feel inadequate for face to face discussions with a doctor or an ethicist who knows a vocabulary and technology the pastor has never heard. But even if ignorant of clinical technology or the language of ethics, no pastor ought to claim inability, disinterest, or unwillingness to think theologically. Study of Holy Scripture and an acknowledgment of church history and the cumulative wisdom of the faithful form the foundation for making the connection between our Lord Jesus Christ and medical ethics. Furthermore, subscribing to the ethic of the theology of the cross places pastors in an important, critical minority position in discussions of ethical dilemmas (142).

Pastors deal with people in a variety of circumstances. This book deals with some of those circumstances, offering sound guidance for the application of the theology of the cross to those who are suffering. I recommend this book highly for the insights it offers for the care of souls, and for the pastor’s own increased understanding and appreciation of his unique role. The best medical, psychological and psychiatric care finally ends on the death bed. The pastor proclaims and brings that which endures beyond the grave: forgiveness of sins, for “where there is forgiveness of sins there are also life and salvation.”

Book Review:

Sermon Studies on the Old Testament Series A

By Wilhelm W. Petersen

John A. Braun, *Sermon Studies on the Old Testament Series A*. Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1998. 386 pages.

Order from our Bethany College Bookstore at
1-800-944-1722. Price: \$23.39.

This is the last volume in a series of nine on sermon studies on the ILCW readings. The ILCW came about as a result of work done through an Inter-Lutheran Commission on Worship and was published in 1973. The ILCW Series is a three-year system offering Old Testament, Epistle, and Gospel selections in three cycles.

According to the *Preface* this volume completes the original plan. E.H. Wendland, the editor of the first volume, wrote that these studies are provided "to help many ministers of Christ throughout the world preach textual, Christ-centered sermons, also giving them and their hearers an increased appreciation for the seasons of the Christian church year."

This volume does exactly that. It contains helps based on the ILCW Old Testament Series A lectionary. As many as 41 writers contributed to this volume of 71 studies, one for every Sunday and major festival of the church year. Congregations may use these readings for the 1998-99 church year, beginning November 29, 1998.

This book contains a wealth of homiletical information. For example, Isaiah 2:1-5 is the Old Testament text for the First Sunday in Advent. It contains a background to the text, which is

really a brief isagogical treatment of the text, followed by an exegetical study of each verse, and then some homiletical suggestions which include three suggested outlines. We submit just one example of Homiletical Suggestions for the First Sunday in Advent: "One of the themes of Advent is the imminent return of our Savior. We have been in the last days for a long time. Our work as God's people is urgent. Now is the day of salvation; it may soon be over! Purchased by the blood of Christ salvation is available for all. It is to be given away by his church. We who have the gospel must remind ourselves and those who hear that the time is short for inviting and telling others. We have a limited time to live our faith as we walk in the light of the Lord. Success, not failure, is the mark of God's church. Although we are the church militant, we must not be the church pessimistic! The battle is tough, but the victory has already been won. Recognizing the lateness of the hour gives the church purpose. God's Word is the message. That Word produces fruit. That faith enjoys and expresses itself in peace."

Each study of the text in this volume is not intended to do the sermon work for the pastor; it is an aid in sermonizing which we as pastors need. The goal of the entire work remains the same: to help ministers of the gospel preach textual, Christ-centered sermons to the joy and edification of Christ's people.

This homiletical resource would be a valuable addition to any pastor's library, and he should find it very helpful, especially in preaching on Old Testament texts.

